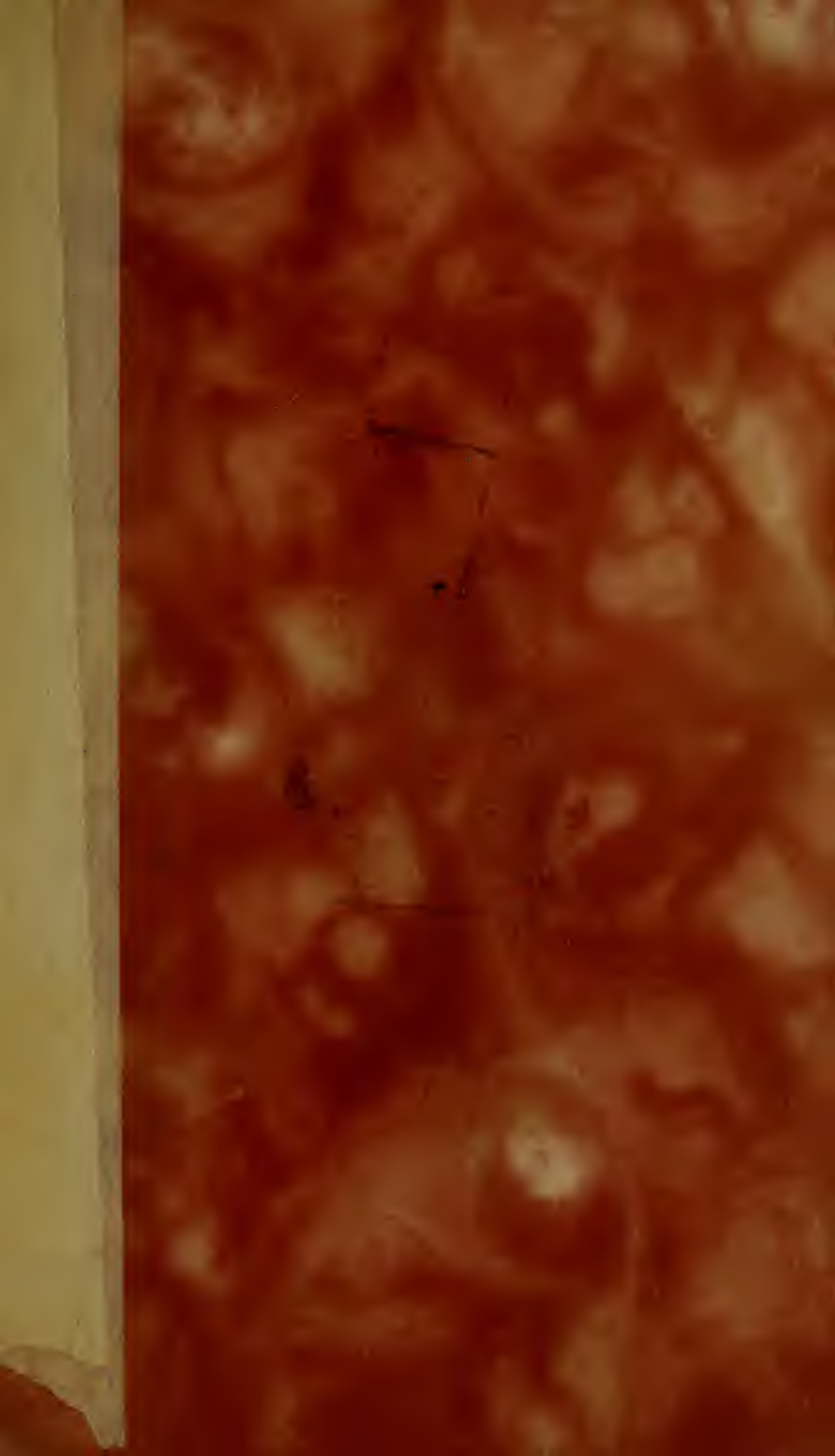


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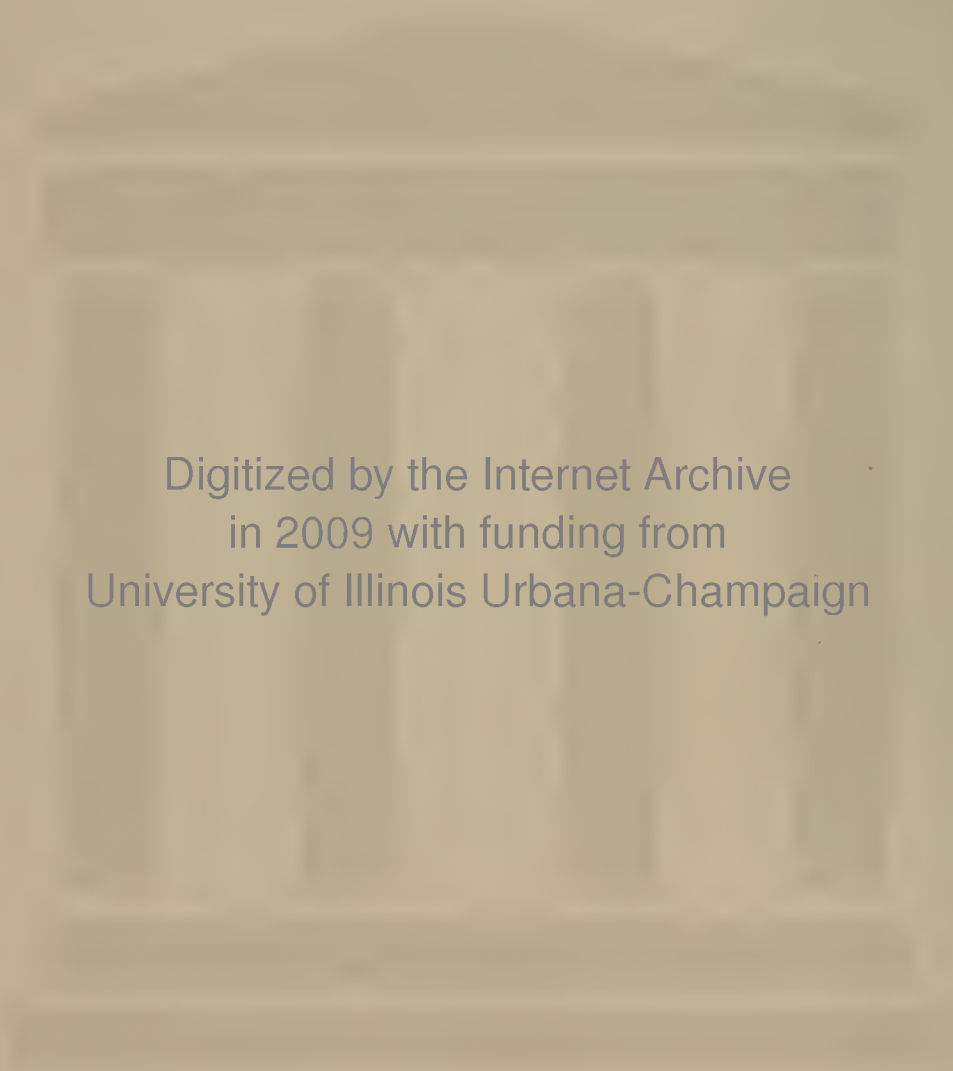
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HEIDELBERG.



VOL. I.

HEIDELBERG.

A Romance.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

“THE SMUGGLER;” “ARRAH NEIL;” “THE STEP-MOTHER,”
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1846.

London :
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.

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HEIDELBERG.

CHAPTER I.

THE realities of the world are few and small ;
the illusions many and vast. Not a sense that
we possess, and hardly a faculty of the mind,
but serves to deceive us ; wholly in some cases,
and partially in all. Yet, strip nature and life
of these deceits, and what would earth be-
come?—what our existence here? See a small
fly stepping over the irregularities of a look-
ing-glass and thinking the polished surface
but a rough and rugged plain, and we have
some idea of what the world would be, if we
saw it as perhaps it is.

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Amongst the sweetest and most friendly delusions, of all the many, is the landscape-painting of imagination. Love, himself, I believe, does not cheat us more, or more pleasantly. Let any traveller ask himself, when he sets eyes upon a scene which he pronounces, at once, most beautiful, how much of the loveliness is added by fancy. It may be a grand, an expansive view, over a wide and varied country; but what is the mind doing while the eye is contemplating it? Peopling it with villages—laying it out in corn-fields and vineyards—filling it with busy life and gay enjoyment; not distinctly, not tangibly; but still the associations rise up in a golden mist, and spread a lustre over all. It may be, on the contrary, a narrower scene: a cottage in a deep glen, with old oaks overshadowing, and the thin blue smoke rising up amongst the green leaves. There too, is imagination busy, with the thoughts of calm retirement from a troublous world, and still, quiet contemplation—the labourer's repose after his labour—the sweet

domestic home—the tender joy of tongues and faces loving and beloved.

There is but one great magician left on earth, and that is Imagination.

Reader, I very often draw from my own heart and its experience—more often than the world knows ; and even now, I can conceive the sensations of those two horsemen as they come at a foot pace over the edge of the hill, where the splendid valley of the Neckar, with its castled town and ancient woods, and giant mountains, first breaks upon the eye. See how the sunshine of the summer evening, softened by the light smoke of the city, pours through the long tall streets and over the high walls and towers of massive stone : see how it catches on each rocky point or prominent crag, as rounding the granite mass of the King's Seat, in its decline towards the west, it covers the brows of all his mountain peers with coronets of gold ; and lo ! where high raised above the town, upon its platform of stone, stands out the lordly castle in bright light and shade.

The green, green Neckar, flowing along in the midst, winds on through the long waving valley, showing ripples of gold wherever, in the sunshine, the winds stir it or the rocks obstruct, and, at each calmer spot, serves as a mirror to the loveliness around ; giving back the bright tints of hills and woods, and town and bridge, with a lustrous clearness no other stream can match. Even that boat, with its many coloured crew of peasantry, shines out upon the face of the river in red and blue, and white and brown, as if the very hues acquired a finer dye from the water that but reflects them ; and the fishing eagle, swooping down upon his finny prey, strikes at it the more fiercely when he sees the image of himself rushing to seize it also from below.

On a fine summer evening then, in the year 1619, two horsemen, coming along the Bergstrasse, or mountain road, suddenly drew in their horses as they reached the top of that little spur of the mountain called the Heiligenberg, on which stands the village of Neunheim,

and there paused, gazing, as if in wonder and admiration, at the scene presented to their eyes. For a moment or two neither spoke, for the height of every emotion is silent; and ere a word was uttered, a small party, which had followed, came up and took place behind them.

In those days great men drew their importance from the number of their attendants. 'Tis the same even now, but the display is made upon a different stage.

The horsemen who came first, however, were but accompanied by two ordinary servants, two grooms or horseboys, each leading a baggage horse heavily laden, and a page; small equipage for a man of station at that period. Nevertheless there was that about the appearance of each, which made the peasantry who passed them in numerous bodies, and in their holiday clothes, take off their broad-brimmed hats and give the strangers two looks ere they walked on. The reason why they did this was not very apparent; for the persons who thus attracted the attention

of the good boors had nothing to excite admiration in their dress. It is true, indeed, gentlemen were not at that time, any more than at present, to be distinguished by their galligaskins; but still the apparel of the two was rather plain than otherwise, consisting of a common riding suit of dark cloth, with a small line of gold, and boots and breeches of untanned leather. Their horses, indeed, were fine, powerful, spirited beasts as ever were mounted; and though the dust, that dimmed their glossy coats, showed that they had journeyed far on a hot day, yet not a sign of fatigue was visible, and the outstretched leg, ready to start again, the high raised head, and expanded nostril, as they snuffed the air of the river, proved that they had no expectation of their day's journey being yet near an end.

There might be, indeed, some reason assigned why the country girls took a second look before they went on, for the two travellers were both young and handsome men; the one very dark, and three or four years older than the

other, who might perhaps be one-and-twenty, or thereabouts, and whose face, though bronzed by exposure to sun and weather, appeared to have been originally fair, if one might judge by the clear, deep-blue eye and the rich brown hair, and moustache of that peculiar hue which shows a golden gleam when the sun shines upon it. He was tall and well formed, long in the arms, broad in the chest, and spare in the waist and flank. The head and face were small, and the features delicate, though not effeminate; the chin somewhat projecting, and the eyes large and full, with a thick and strongly marked eyebrow. When at rest the whole countenance had an expression of gravity and decision beyond his apparent years, and there was something in his air as he sat his horse, a look of command and free thoughtful power, which seemed to bespeak one who, notwithstanding his youth, had been long accustomed to regulate his own conduct and act upon his own views.

The other was very different, yet still a

handsome man, much darker in complexion, not quite so tall. with a keen sharp black eye, under a wide and somewhat projecting brow, marked gracefully by a dark, arching, and somewhat raised line of eyebrow. The lips were thin, and the line from the wing of the nose to the corner of the mouth strongly marked, so as to give the ordinary expression of the countenance a slight, a very slight touch of sarcasm; and yet there was a sort of sparkling joyousness about it whenever he spoke, which we may as well notice once for all, as it was the predominant look and was exceedingly winning, although the cast of the mere features was stern and determined.

As they paused and gazed, the face of the younger and fairer of the two was full of admiration, pure, simple, and high; too deeply felt to admit even of a smile. The other gazed over the landscape too, but then for a moment turned his eyes with a half laughing glance, withdrawn as soon as given, to his companion's

face, as if he and his feelings afforded as much matter for thought and examination as the beautiful scene which had just presented itself.

At length, after a pause, of about two minutes, the younger exclaimed,—

“How beautiful! how enchanting! and bursting upon us thus, it seems like magic.”

“Very lovely, indeed,” replied his companion, with a smile; “and I doubt not we shall find still lovelier things within those old grey walls—at least let us fancy it; for fancy is the goddess that embellishes all things, and is, even now, doing wonders in your mind, Algeron, for the fair city of Heidelberg.”

“I know not what fancy has to do with it,” replied the other, gravely; “methinks never was there a congregation of more beautiful objects presented to the eye of man. Nature does everything here, William, we have no need of fancy. Look at that town, that castle, those lordly mountains, those green waving woods, the river gliding——”

“Like a golden lizard, you would say,

amongst the stones," rejoined his companion, interrupting him. "In pity let us have some figure of speech to show that your admiration has not at least benumbed imagination. A simile, a trope, a metaphor, even a hyperbole will do. Can you not call them godlike towers? or figure me the mountains as giant Titans, with a bushy beard of oaks and beeches? What has become of all your flowers of rhetoric? You will never be able to keep pace with the doctors and poets of the university, if you go on in this dull style. Or is it that you have expended all the riches of your poesy upon the fair dames you left behind in Italy, and have not got a beggarly tester of fine words for the fair town of Heidelberg? or, again, are you afraid of the exchequer running low, and are hoarding your smart speeches with miserly avarice, to let love, like the miser's son, squander them by-and-by upon the lovely dames of the Electoral court?"

"Good faith!" replied the other, "I doubt much, my friend, whether I shall see anything

in any court so lovely to my eyes as that fair range of mountains, out there upon the right, looking like sapphires on a sky of gold."

"Improved! improved!" cried his companion, dropping his rein and clapping his hands; "those sapphires and that gold come out most splendidly. The poor Haardt, with her stony rocks, would be grateful to you, doubtless, for thus enriching her; but let us on, I am for living loveliness. Of all the landscapes I ever saw, the most beautiful has been a rosy cheek and alabaster throat; the brightest waters in the world for me, lie in the deep well of a dark blue eye; and in all the sun-rises or sunsets that ever covered the sky with crimson, there is nothing like the warm blush upon a young face, or the dawning smile upon a rosy lip. Let us on, let us on, I say; pleasure is the pursuit of life; let grave thoughts follow us, they will catch us soon enough if we do not make haste and get before them."

"'T were a good philosophy, could it but last," answered his companion, with a smile,

touching his horse gently with the spur, and in a moment more they were winding on by the side of the Neckar towards the old bridge, which, like many another building there, was not destined to see the present day.

Perhaps the younger of the two travellers felt that his companion was right in what he had said regarding the ornamental powers of fancy, when they passed the gates of Heidelberg and entered the town itself. The sunshiny splendour of the valley was lost in the narrow streets and tall dark houses; but still the shade was pleasant, for the evening was hot; and there was something in the long lines of the quaint, many-storied buildings, with their ornamented gables to the streets and every here and there a gleam of sunshine breaking across through an aperture—something in the gay crowds of people, in the ringing laugh and cheerful buzz, even in the baskets of fruits and flowers that obstructed every turning, which did much with a young

and enthusiastic mind, to compensate for the picturesque beauty of the valley which they no longer beheld ; and still, at the end of many of the streets, the towers and walls of the castle were seen looking down from its proud rock, with the green branches and rugged crags of the mountain, towering up beyond.

“ In the name of all that ’s sweet and savoury, let us get to our inn as fast as we can,” said the elder of the young men. “ My ears are cracked with the hoarse merriment of these overjoyous German throats ; and my nose feels feverish with all the vapours of garlic and sauerkraut which it has imbibed since we passed the gates.—What is the name of the inn, Tony ?” he continued, turning his head to one of the servants behind, a merry-looking fellow, with a good deal of shrewd humour in his countenance.

“ The Golden something, Sir William,” replied the man ; “ but, by my faith, I forget what. We have passed through so many golden and silver vessels within the last month,

that I am quite confounded by them. We rode upon a golden goose last night ; the day before it was a silver moon ; then we have had the cock of gold, the golden pitcher, the golden crown, the silver cross, the silver staff, and the silver star. We have had all sorts of fishes that ever swam in the sea, and all the beasts that ever went into the ark, besides a number of monsters."

"Hush, sir, hush ; give me a reasonable answer, and a short one," replied the gentleman ; "and remember what your master told you, about forgetting our names till you are permitted to remember them.—What was the name of the inn, I say ?"

"It was the Golden something, sir," replied the man, undismayed ; "and, if I must give it a name when I don't recollect the right one, I'll give it the name of the Stag, by way of a change. We have not been at a Stag for a week at least."

The other gentleman smiled ; for he recollected, as soon as it was named, that the hos-

telry to which they had been directed was really the Stag; and he somewhat doubted that his servant had ever forgotten it. "Now, then, William, to find it," he said; "for this town seems full of signs. But here comes a man on horseback,—by his dusty boots a traveller like ourselves,—German too, by the cut of his cloak and the feather on the left side of his hat. We will ask him;" and, spurring his horse forward a little, he met, at the corner of the street, a well-dressed man about thirty years of age, who was riding fast at the moment, but who checked his horse, when the other saluted him courteously and, in very tolerable German, asked the way to the Golden Stag.

"Follow me," replied the stranger, "and I will show you; I am going thither myself:" and riding on, without waiting to see whether the strangers accompanied him or not, he took his way round the great church, and sprang to the ground at the steps of a large wide rambling house, which bore, in bas relief, upon a panel in the second story, the grotesque figure of a

gouty stag, gilt, and ornamented with a collar and chain. In the centre of the house there was a large archway, with steps on each side, which were also brought round the angle and all along the front on either side of the arch, forming a sort of base to the whole building. A small door—that at which the traveller halted—entered from the top of the steps, and this was thrown open as soon as his approach was perceived from one of the windows on the ground floor. At least half a score of drawers and horseboys rushed out from various holes and corners about the building. His horse was taken with every sign of respect; and the low-bowing landlord, with night-cap in hand, the officious readiness of all the domestics of the establishment, and the reverend greeting of two men, whose badges and ribbons showed them to be the liveried attendants of some high family, convinced the travellers who followed closely, that their guide to the Golden Stag was a personage of some importance in the town of Heidelberg.

The one turned round to the other and smiled, somewhat superciliously perhaps; for the haughty contempt of other people's customs, and the national pride, which undervalues the distinctions and ranks of foreign countries, to exalt those of his own, were as much characteristic of the native of a certain island in those days as at present. That supercilious smile spoke the Englishman at once. Though it would be very difficult to analyze philosophically the sensations from which it sprang, perhaps it simply arose out of contempt for the deference shown to a man, who would venture to wear a feather in a different part of his hat from that in which the English generally placed it. I do not mean to aver that it was so; but, from what I know of my fellow-countrymen, I think it very probable. Strange to say too, the countenance, on which this smile appeared, was that of the elder, and, to all appearance, the more experienced and worldly of the two. The other smiled not, but, checking his horse to a walk, as soon as he was sure of the position of the

Golden Stag, rode slowly up to the house and dismounted, with a calm and deliberate air.

By this time the stranger had disappeared, as well as the landlord and most of the attendants; but, nevertheless, the bustle of a new arrival soon recommenced; and, in five or ten minutes more, the two travellers were lodged in large, comfortable, but somewhat gloomy rooms, and had the most positive assurance of the landlord that an excellent repast was ready to be set before them the moment they thought fit to descend to the common room and partake of it.

The servants and the page busied themselves in opening portmantles and saddlebags. Ruffs, collars, velvet cloaks and laced doublets were spread out upon the large old comfortable beds. An abundance of cold water, together with the assistance of Italian essences and perfumery removed all traces of travel from their persons; and when, at the end of about half an hour, the younger of the two, with the page to

show him the way, descended to the hall, it would have been difficult, perhaps, to find a more distinguished looking man within the limits of Europe. He was evidently very young—youth could be traced, in every gently flowing line, in the soft and rounded cheek, in the even, unfurrowed brow; but there was an air of stately dignity in his carriage; a calm, almost cold, firmness in the expression of his face, which showed that, from some cause—either an early initiation into life and the sad experiences of the world, or from a precocious appreciation of the realities of things—the mind was older than the man. This happens not unfrequently, and is somewhat strange in its effects; but still more strange is the result, when a triple combination takes place, as was in some degree the case with him; and when the heart, too, remains young, after the judgment has become mature, so that its passions, aided by the energies of the corporeal frame, are placed in frequent antagonism, with a powerful and over-ruling intellect.

The page threw open the door of a large room below, which looked somewhat dark and gloomy ; for the windows were small, the paneling was of black oak, and the sun was on the other side of the house. It was not solitary, however ; for there, seated in one stiff tall-backed chair, and his feet, divested of all travelling incumbrances, on another, was the gentleman whom they had met in the streets of the town, and who had served as their guide thither. His hat was cast upon a small table, his sword lay beside it, his riding-boots had been drawn off, and some time had been bestowed upon his toilet, too ; for his doublet and cloak had been changed ; but yet the difference of appearance produced did not seem very remarkable to an eye accustomed to the most splendid courts in Europe.

To say truth, the young Englishman had not been very much prepossessed in the stranger's favour. The brief bluff answer he had given when addressed, the manner in which he had ridden on, with hardly a look to see that

they followed, seemed to him to betoken a want of courtesy, with which, indeed, he was not inclined to quarrel, but which he did not greatly admire. The other did not move when he entered either, though certainly not unconscious of his presence; for the large, clear, grey eyes were raised and fixed upon the new-comer, with a firm, inquiring, almost insolent stare. It was unpleasant to the young Englishman; but he did not come there to seek disputes; and, turning to the page who waited at the door, as if for orders, he bade him tell the landlord to serve the supper as quickly as might be, and then he walked to the window, and gazed out at the varied scene which the streets presented.

In two minutes he was lost in a reverie, forgetting altogether that there was any other being in the room but himself; and, though the other guest rose, moved his hat and sword, and walked up and down with a heavy step, the sound these evolutions produced fell upon an unconscious ear which had no power to

carry them to a mind far away, busied with other things.

In about five minutes the door again opened, a quick step was heard, and the other English traveller, entering, advanced to his friend, laid his hand upon his shoulder and exclaimed, in a gay tone.—“What, in the depth again, Algernon! On my life, nature must have intended you for an oyster. Leave you but a moment and you sink down into an ocean of meditation, fix yourself firmly to the bottom, and would remain there, I believe, for ever, with your shell half open, waiting for what Providence would send to fill your mouth withal. But, on my faith, I have no such patience; I am like the patriarch Isaac, and have a longing for savoury meats—likewise, for some amusement. This seems a wild boar of the forest. We must force him from his lair; and he will show sport, depend upon it.”

Hitherto he had spoken in English; but now, turning to the stranger, with a low and somewhat extravagant bow, and yet with an

air of courtly ease, he said, in French: "We have to thank you, Monsieur, for guiding us to this inn. I trust that the host will speedily give us farther occasion for gratitude, by setting before us an excellent supper.—I see he has laid three covers, from which I argue, that the enjoyment of the repast is to be heightened to us by your participating in it."

"It is my intention to sup before I go," replied the stranger, in very tolerable French, though with a haughty tone; but the other was not to be rebuffed; and, proceeding with great apparent good humour, but that sort of exaggeration of courtesy which is rarely without a touch of sarcasm in it, he soon engaged his German companion in more familiar conversation and broke through the husk of reserve, in which he had at first encased himself. His replies, when they became more frank and free, showed a mind not uncultivated, an intellect of some extent, and views in general just and powerful, though there was an alloy of haughty presumption and somewhat irritable

self-esteem, which became ever more apparent, if not more offensive, as his reserve wore away.

In the midst of their conversation, the landlord and his satellites entered with the supper. Two of the travellers' servants came in to wait upon their masters; one of the attendants in livery, who had met their German companion at the door, took a place behind his chair, fluttering with ribbons and tags; and the three gentlemen applied themselves to the satisfying of an importunate appetite. After a few minutes the younger of the two Englishmen seemed to cast off his thoughtful mood, gave himself up to the gay leading of his friend, and laughed and jested likewise. The wine that was placed upon the table did not seem at all to his taste, and pushing it from him with a shudder, after the first drops had passed his lips, he pronounced it vinegar disguised.

"Come, come, mine host," he said, looking over his shoulder to the master of the inn, who had remained in the room, perhaps with a due calculation of the excellence of the beve-

rage he had served, in its relation to the quality of his guests—for innkeepers, even then, were not unaccustomed to make their wine the measure, or *aristometre*, of those they entertained; “come, come, mine host, this is doubtless good wine in its way, for those whom it suits; but we have ridden far and want some more generous juice to refresh us. Let us have something super-excellent, the very *bride* of your cellar, as I think you call it here in Germany; and mind that it be at least a hundred and fifty times better than this or else it will not do.”

“You speak good German, too,” said the stranger, “and seem to know our customs well, even to the tricks of our landlords. Were you ever here before?”

“Not in this good town of Heidelberg,” replied the young gentleman; “but some three years ago, I passed through other parts of Germany on my way to the south. The reason why I speak French to you is, that my friend here does not understand the tongue of the country.”

“’Tis a pity,” replied the other, “the language is a fine one, and so, methinks, strangers must find the country. I have travelled too, myself, but never saw aught finer than this our valley of the Neckar.”

“Most beautiful, indeed,” rejoined the young Englishman; “so much so, that I judge one might while away a day or two here very well.”

“Methinks one may, or pass a life here either,” rejoined their companion, with a somewhat haughty and offended air. “The court of the Elector Palatine is, I believe, second to few in Europe.”

“What is that, Algernon, what is that?” cried the other Englishman, who seemed to have comprehended part of what was said; “it is treason to friendship to talk a language in my presence which is unintelligible to my poor ears.”

The other gentleman explained in French; and with a smile, slightly sarcastic, his friend turned to their companion, exclaiming: “Is this court so magnificent, then, indeed? We

are ignorant of this part of Europe, sir, having been long in the far south, sporting amongst princes and lazaroni at Naples, jesting with priests, cardinals, and popes at Rome, discussing pictures, statues, and points of religion with painters, philosophers, and atheists at Florence, and masking and making music with fair dames and reverend seniors in the City of the waves. We have brought over a stock of vices and small-talk, I trust, that would decorate any court in Christendom; and, faith, if yours is such as you describe it, and fond of magnificence and merriment, velvet and volubility, we must go up and visit it; and, doubtless, shall be made much of, as our merits deserve."

"The access is not so easy as you may suppose, sir," answered the other sternly; "it requires something else than a man's own account of himself to gain entrance and esteem there."

"Ha! here comes our host with a very sagacious looking bottle," cried the younger travellers, who thought, perhaps, his friend

was pushing his jests somewhat too far. "If those cobwebs have been spun round the neck by thinner legs than your fingers, landlord, the wine would be as sour as cider, or of an immortal quality."

"I will warrant you, sir," answered the host, putting down long-stalked glasses, "if ever you tasted better in your days, say my name is not Rheinhardt;" and he filled up to the brim for the younger traveller and his companion.

Before the former tasted it, however, he pressed their fellow-guest to join them and give his opinion of the wine; and, on his showing some reluctance, added: "Nay, nay, if you refuse, I shall think that you are offended with the light talk of my jesting friend there. You must bear with him, you must bear with him, sir, for it is an inveterate habit he has; and he could sooner go without his dinner than his joke, at whosoever's expense it is indulged. It is the custom of the country we come from last; for there it is so dangerous to speak

seriously on any subject, that men take refuge in a jest as in a redoubt."

The stranger seemed satisfied with this explanation, joined in their wine, pronounced it excellent, forgot his haughty air ; and, returning to the subject which they had left, began to expatiate once more upon the beauty, splendour, gallantry, and wit of the court of the Elector, Frederic V., when suddenly a loud explosion, which seemed to shake the solid walls of the old building, and was echoed for several seconds by the rocks and mountains round, interrupted his declamation, and made the two Englishmen gaze in each other's face.

Ere they could inquire farther, another roar, and then another, was heard ; and, turning to their German companion, the elder exclaimed : " In the name of our fair lady Fortune ! what is the meaning of this ? Is the castle besieging the town, or the town the castle ? Or have you imported Mount Vesuvius to warm you here from time to time with an eruption, and

preserve the antiquities of the place in ashes, pumice-stone, and sulphur?"

"Neither, my good sir," answered their fellow-traveller, who had remained totally unmoved; "it is but the guns of the castle firing in honour of the Elector's birth-day, the nineteenth of August; for on this day and hour, now three-and-twenty years ago, our noble prince was born in the good town of Amberg. There is a grand banquet at the castle to-day; but, ride hard as I would, I was too late for it, and so must content myself with going to the reception in the evening, which, they say, will be one of unusual magnificence."

"Faith, then, I think we will go there too," said the elder of the two Englishmen; "doubtless we shall see collected all the beauty of the Court Palatine."

"If you get admission," rejoined the other drily.

"Oh, that is beyond all doubt," was the bantering reply: "your prince can never be such a barbarian as to refuse the pleasures of

his court to two such proper young men as ourselves, especially as we have the honour and advantage of your acquaintance.”

“I fancy you will find him sufficiently civilized to do so,” said the other sharply; “and my acquaintance, sir, can only be beneficial to those of whose name and station I am informed. I may as well at once give you to understand, knowing this court, and being connected with it, that you will not be admitted unless you be properly introduced.”

There was a degree of arrogance in his tone, more than in his words, that at once amused and offended the younger of the two gentlemen; and, after his companion had exclaimed, “Then must we die without benefit of clergy,” he turned towards the other gentleman, saying, with a grave smile,—

“We have a bad habit, sir, in England, of proving the strength of our own convictions by laying wagers on any subject of dispute. If such were the custom here, I would ask you what you will bet that I and my friend here

will not go up to the castle this very night, and, without any introduction whatsoever, without naming our names, stating our rank, or disclosing our pursuits, receive kind hospitality from the elector, and pass the evening with his court."

The personage whom he addressed replied first with a laugh, and then said: "Perhaps you may find your way in, for the attendants are not likely to drive back a well dressed man; but if the elector's eye falls upon you, that of his chamberlain, or any of his high officers, you will soon be expelled, depend upon it, unless you divulge your names."

"Not so," replied the other; "I will go straight to the elector; I will refuse to divulge my name, and yet I will pass the evening there; on all which I will stake a hundred crowns. You yourself shall be the witness, as you say you are going; but, of course, it is understood that you do and say nothing to impede my proceedings."

"Done!" cried the other, striking his hand

on the table ; “ I take your wager. Methinks I should know this court better than you can.”

“ I have known many courts,” answered the young man, with a good-humoured laugh, “ and never yet found one in which impudence and a cool face could not make its way. So now let us be friends and shake hands upon our wagers, which shall be decided as soon as you are ready.”

The stranger took his hand, not very cordially, and replied : “ We must wait a little ; the banquet will be scarcely over yet. I would fain know, too,” he added, “ who are to be my companions in entering the elector’s court.”

“ Oh ! make yourself perfectly easy,” replied the elder of the two young men ; “ you shall seem to know nothing of us from the moment you pass the gate ; nay, with this sweet world’s simple versatility, shall turn the shoulder coldly to those with whom you have climbed the hill the moment you have reached the top. The truth is, honourable sir, my friend and myself

have resolved not to reveal our real names while travelling in these foreign lands. As a matter of course, we have each packed up with our saddle-bags and portmantles, a fresh and well-conditioned name for the nonce. He is called Algernon Grey : I have been known for some months past as William Lovet. We do not ask you to believe that our godfathers and our godmothers, at our baptisms, were at all familiar with these appellations, either nomen or prenomen ; nevertheless, it is a whim we have, and we request our excellent friends to humour us therein. Those who would do us reverence, tack esquire to the end of each name, to designate the lowest rank of gentlemen in England qualified to bear arms ; but we are not particular, and even when that title is omitted, the bare name does very well without."

"So be it then," said their companion, gravely. "You will have to ride, Master Lovet, as perhaps you know, for it is somewhat difficult to find carriages here that would

drag you up that hill ! But you make your boots large," he continued, playing upon an expression commonly used in Germany at that time, to express a man who stood upon little ceremony—"But you make your boots large, and therefore your hose will escape soiling. I go to get mine on ;" and rising, he left the room.

The younger traveller, whom we shall henceforth call by the name he thought fit to assume, was inclined to fall into a fit of musing again ; but the other leaned over the table, saying : "Ask the fellow's name, Algernon. He seems a sullen and discourteous dog, unwilling, or unable, to understand a jest."

"Good faith ! you began like a young haggard, William," replied his companion, "dashing straight at your game, without waiting to see its flight. All men are not ready to jest with every stranger. He may have good qualities, though he seems haughty enough ;" and turning to one of the attendants of the

inn, he asked, in German, the name of the gentleman who had just left the room.

“That, sir, is the Baron Oberntraut,” replied the man, with a low reverence; “he is the only son of the master of the horse to the elector, and a captain of cuirassiers.”

“What! the same who distinguished himself so much in the campaign of Juliers?” cried the young gentleman.

“The same, sir,” answered the man. “He was very young then; but he did great things, I have heard.”

“By my honour! he has some reason to be proud,” observed Algernon Grey; “but come, William, let us get ready too. Order the horses round, Tony.—I suppose they are not tired with our short march.”

“Tired, sir!” replied the man. “Lord bless you! with the oats they have got into them since they came, they’d take the castle up there as if it were a five-barred gate. I heard Hob say that Barbary had eaten a peck and a half, while you were changing your cloak!”

“If that were the first lie he ever told, it might be worth repeating,” said William Lovet; “but let us go, Algernon. I am all on fire for the beauties of the fair Elizabeth’s court; and if I can find out which is this Oberntraut’s mistress, on my soul I will plague him.”

CHAPTER II.

“WHO is that, who is that?” cried the small shrill voice of a little deformed boy, who stood as near to the gate of the castle as the soldiers would let him—and, to say the truth, they had suffered him to approach somewhat nearer than their orders warranted, in respect for a tall, beautiful, well formed girl, his sister, who held him by the hand.

“Which do you mean, Hans?” asked his fair companion. “That one, in the black and gold doublet, and the cloak lined with crimson? That is the young Baron of Oberntraut, the Great Captain, who defeated the Austrians on the other side of the Rhine.”

“He does not look to me like a great captain,” said the small sharp voice proceeding from the narrow and protuberant chest. “I thought he would have been all in armour, as the soldiers were once, when I saw them ride through the streets.”

“Is that a Frenchman?” asked one of the lower order of students, who was leaning in studied, not to say affected negligence, with his arm round the neck of one of his fellows. “Do you see how he wears his hat? and in what a jaunty way he has thrown his cloak all upon his left shoulder, as if he wished to keep the hilt of his sword warm?”

“Oh, he may keep it warm enough in Heidelberg, if he like,” rejoined the other student to whom he spoke; “we’ll give it work, if it want it; but which do you mean, Frederic? for there are two of them—the black cock or the white one?”

“The fair one,” replied the former speaker; “the one in the philimot and gold; he is a proper man, Carl, and, I should think, ready

enough to use his rapier, if one may judge by his look."

"Oh, looks are nothing," replied the other; "but I should think he is no Frenchman. More likely an Englishman, come, like the rest of them, to flutter at our court."

"Come away, wife, come away," said a jolly, fat citizen, with an ace-of-clubs nose and a beard tolerably sprinkled with grey, to a pretty woman, some twenty years younger, who stood beside him, holding the hand of a little boy about four or five years old—"It is full time for us to be getting home; don't you see the sun is nearly down—one half behind the hills there? and it will be dark before we reach the door. There, come along; you are a great admirer of fair men, I know: but, methinks, you should have had enough of them to-night; so let us homeward, if you would not have yon gallant kiss his hand to you, as a reward for your staring."

While this conversation and much of a similar kind had been going on amongst the

numerous groups, which had assembled round the outward Burgthor, or castle-gate, of the fine old palace of the Electors Palatine, the party of three gentlemen and seven servants, which had slowly wound up the long and steep ascent from the town to the castle, had reached the flat at the top, and were passing over the drawbridge, which then existed at the Burgthor, into that wide extent of ground, which was inclosed by the great wall of the fortress. Whether it was that the presence of Oberntraut, who was well known to the soldiery, procured them free admission, or that the guards had only orders to keep out the ordinary citizens of the place, the whole party were suffered to proceed, without opposition, and rode on to the bridge-house, while fine strains of martial music, wafted by the wind from the great court of the castle, and the sound of many a gay and musical voice from the gardens round, told that the revelry of the Elector's birth-night was still going on with undiminished spirit.

Under the arch of the bridge-house, two of the guards crossed their partizans before the horses, and Oberntraut, anxious to show that he kept his word, in not throwing any impediment in the way of the two Englishmen, turned his head, saying in German, “You must dismount here, being visitors; I ride into the court, as one of the Elector’s household.”

The soldiers instantly raised their halberts to let him pass with the two servants, who had accompanied him from the inn. At the same moment, one of Algernon Grey’s attendants sprang to his stirrup, to aid him in dismounting; and, giving his sword to his page to carry, the young gentleman and his friend disencumbered themselves of the large riding boots of the day—which, he it remarked, easily covered shoes and all—and passing between the guards, with a confident air, as if there could be no earthly doubt of their admission, walked on, under the archway of the great square tower, into the wide court-yard.

The scene was a very brilliant one, which

was now presented to their eyes. Crowds of attendants, belonging either to the household of the Elector Palatine himself, or to those of the great nobles of his court, were scattered thickly over the wide space before them—sometimes standing in groups of eight or nine together—sometimes moving hither and thither, with quick or sauntering pace; and every colour of the rainbow, in its very brightest tints, was to be seen displayed in the gorgeous costume of the day. Neither was there any lack of lace and embroidery, plumes, sword-knots, and fluttering scarfs; and, around this gay flower-bed, rose up, in the faint evening light, innumerable and irregular masses of building, of every period and of every style, the remains of which can still be traced, slowly mouldering away under the hand of time, and presenting to the thoughtful eye a sad picture of the end of all great designs; a bitter lesson to man's presumptuous hopes, a dark but chastening admonition to joy, prosperity, and power.

On the right hand, under a wide arcade supported by graceful columns, was a large and skilful band of musicians, making the air ring with the sounds of their instruments. Upon the left, in darkness, such as time casts upon all man's doings, was a pile of architecture, the light and graceful lines of which betokened a very early period of construction. Nearly in the centre of the court rose up a fountain; the sparkling jets of which caught and reflected the rosy light which had spread over the sky above. Farther on, to the right, appeared a vast mass in the Italian taste, covered with rich and splendid ornaments—statues, arabesques, and pilasters—and pierced with innumerable windows, from which bright lights were shining, showing that the sun's decline was felt within. In more than one other place, too, on both sides and in front, a taper, or a lamp might be seen passing slowly on from room to room across the various casements, affording a sort of mysterious interest to a fanciful mind, as the eye of the young

Englishman rested on the dark piles to the west, from which the sunshine had for several hours departed.

Grouped together near the fountain, and held by grooms and stable boys, were a number of horses, richly caparisoned; and near them was seen the form of the Baron of Oberntraut, slowly dismounting and speaking to his two servants, as if waiting to give time for his late companions to come up.

“That is civil and honourable of him,” said Algernon Grey, as they advanced towards him.

“A good deal of self-confidence in it,” answered the other; “he feels so sure of winning his bet, that he wishes to prove to us that it is done by no unfair advantage.”

“Still the worst side of everything!” rejoined his friend, with a grave smile, and moved on. But as soon as Oberntraut perceived them within a few yards, he himself advanced towards a flight of steps before one of the principal buildings, where an open door and a blaze of light, displayed a low arched hall, crowded

with attendants. His step was slow and stately, but though, before he had reached the top of the steps, the two Englishmen were close to him, he took not the slightest notice of them, and passed on.

Several other persons were, at the moment, advancing in the same direction; and Lovet whispered to his companion; "Follow the stream, follow the stream." Algernon Grey did so, and found himself guided by the rest to what seemed the great staircase of the castle. It was not indeed so magnificent, either in its proportions or its decorations, as the splendour of the exterior might have led a traveller to expect; but what it wanted in architectural beauty was supplied by extrinsic decoration of great taste, consisting of flowers and shrubs and branches disposed in such manner as to mingle the harsh lines of the grey stone pleasantly and symmetrically with the graceful bends of the green foliage. An object had been sought and attained very much neglected in those times, namely, the perfect lighting of the stair-

case ; for, although the day had hardly closed, the lamps were already gleaming along the balustrades, not with a harsh and overpowering glare, but with a tempered brightness, which showed all that could please and captivate the eye and yet left a dim indistinctness, not disagreeable, over the rest. Five or six persons preceded the young Englishmen in their ascent, some speaking together, some silent and lonely; but all turned to the left on reaching the top, and passed through a guarded door, round which a number of attendants were standing, into a small anti-chamber, where a single officer appeared leaning his hand upon a table.

No questions were asked of any of those who went before Algernon Grey and his friend; and he with calm and grave deliberation followed, neither looking to the right nor the left, nor taking the slightest notice of a whispered inquiry, which he heard running amongst the servants, as to who and what he was. William Lovet, in his ignorance of the language, was also ignorant of all such perils to their

enterprise; and, with a gay and well-assured look, followed close upon his companion's steps, adjusting the glittering tie of his sword-knot and thrusting his rapier a little further back.

The moment they entered the anti-room, Algernon Grey marked that the Baron of Oberntraut paused for an instant at the opposite door, as if to see whether the officer on duty would stop them, or require their names. The latter immediately advanced a step or two; but then, to the surprise of all present, he gave the two gentlemen a lowly salutation, and drew back to the table again.

A slight smile curled Algernon's handsome lip; and, with a tone of dignity, he said aloud, addressing the officer: "Will you be pleased, sir, to inform the Elector Palatine personally, if you can have his ear for a moment, that two English gentlemen of befitting rank, who for reasons of their own decline to give their names, crave his gracious permission to witness the splendours of his court this night, and to tread a measure in his hall

with the fair dames of our own fair princess. We ask it with loyal hearts and true, well aware of what we do, and not venturing to request aught unbecoming of him to grant, or us to receive."

The officer bowed, and, turning towards those without, said: "Keep the door!" and then, advancing towards the inner chamber, seemed to answer quickly a question of Oberntraut, who had lingered near the entrance, and then passed on.

"Now are your hundred crowns in peril, Algernon," said William Lovet; "a fair new saddle-cloth embroidered in gold, a silver bit and gilt stirrups, together with an ear-ring of nineteen carats and a ruby, to say nothing of a new kerchief to Madge, Marianne, or Margery, all hang upon the chance of the fair delivery of a simple message by an anti-chamber officer of an Elector Palatine. Heaven save the mark! if the pretty maid with the brown eyes, who was likely in the course of time and by the concatenation of circumstances, to have that kerchief at your hands, now knew upon what a

rash cast you have risked it, would she not fret and scold at the probable result of the bet at the Golden Stag?"

"She would be silly so to do," replied Algernon Grey. "I have no fears of money going out of my purse to-night; the good man will deliver his message aptly enough, I am sure; and the message, of which you understood not a word, was just the bait to catch the young Elector with his notions of chivalrous gallantry. Hark, what a buzz comes through the doorway. Methinks half the palatinate must be here; and see how the figures glide about across and across—now in blue and silver—now in green and gold—now in black and pearls, like painted shadows in a showman's box. But here comes our messenger, and with him a very grave and reverend personage with a beard of an ell long. Let us advance to meet him, as if we knew his inward dignity at once by his outward shape."

With the same stately carriage which he had lately assumed, Algernon Grey took a few

slow steps forward, to meet a somewhat corpulent gentleman, whose hair and colouring seemed to bespeak a hasty and choleric temperament, and then made him a low bow. The officer, who had been in waiting in the anti-chamber, pointed with his hand to the two Englishmen, saying: "These are the two gentlemen;" and the other, who followed, returned their salutation, scanning them for a moment with his eye ere he spoke.

"It is the Elector's pleasure, sirs," he said at length, "that I introduce you to his presence;" and once more he gazed at them from head to foot, in a somewhat haughty and supercilious manner.

But Algernon Grey was not to be provoked out of his caution; and, with a very slight inclination of the head, he replied: "The Elector is gracious; we are at your command."

There was nothing more to be said; and therefore the Electoral officer wheeled his large person round, and, with a somewhat more civil

gesture than he had hitherto used, led the way into the chamber beyond. It was filled with numerous persons of both sexes, dressed in the gorgeous costume of the day ; and certainly the court of the mightiest monarch in Europe could not have displayed greater splendour of apparel, or greater beauty of person, than appeared at that of the Count Palatine. People of all nations and all languages were there ; and amongst the busy crowds which moved hither and thither, every hue of hair, every shade of complexion was to be seen ; from the fair-haired, blue-eyed children of the north, to the dark Transylvanian, and the swarthy Moor. Through all the throng the chamberlain of the Elector cleared a way for himself and the two who followed : the rotundity of his person acting as a sort of human wedge, which left a vacancy behind it ; and many a head was turned to gaze upon the young strangers ; it being remarked that they looked neither to the right nor the left, as if they did not wish to recognise or be recognised by any one, should there,

by chance, be found an acquaintance amongst the varied multitude.

Although the immense masses of the castle, as they had seen it from the outside, had impressed them with a strong idea of its vastness, yet, from some cause or another, Algernon Grey had expected to find the Elector and his fair wife in the room beyond the anti-chamber. Indeed its extent was so great, its decorations so sumptuous, and the groups it contained so numerous, that it might well have been supposed the audience-hall of a great prince. But everything in the castle of Heidelberg, at that period was upon so magnificent a scale, that no acquaintance with other palaces enabled a visitor to judge of what was to be his reception here. It contained, in those days, a suite of ten splendid saloons, one opening into the other and each covered with lavish ornament. Through the whole of these, till at length they reached what was called the silver chamber, the two young Englishmen were led, before they found the object of their search.

Two pages, one stationed on each side of the wide door way, held up the curtains of white velvet and silver, which hung from huge rings above; and as Algernon entered, a more quiet scene than those he had just passed, but still a very striking one, presented itself to his eyes. At the farther side of the room, perhaps at a distance of forty or fifty feet, standing a little in advance of two chairs of state, were seen Frederic and the Electress, both in the pride of youth and beauty. The features of neither were perfectly regular, but the face of each had its own peculiar charm of expression, the one beaming with graceful kindness and dignified good humour, the other sparkling with wit, imagination, and soul. Strikingly, though not regularly handsome, certainly they were; and seeing them standing there, clothed in similar colours, of the same age, slightly contrasted complexion, with only that difference in height which might well exist between the husband and the wife, one might have been tempted to think that no two people had ever been more

fitly matched, had but the countenance of Frederic possessed more energy and determination of character. Elizabeth stood on her husband's right hand; and on his left were seen first a page, holding his sword, and then a group of the glittering nobles of his court; but on the right of the Electress, were assembled twelve or thirteen of the fairest flowers of Christendom, all robed nearly alike in white and silver; their marble brows and glossy hair bound with garlands, as it were, of diamonds and pearls. In other parts of the room—near the windows—near the doors—under the arches on either side, were several other groups conversing in a low tone; but the middle was vacant, at least when Algeron Grey entered; and he was advancing after his guide, towards the young sovereign before him, when suddenly, from a group on his right, a glittering courtier of about his own age started forward, and held out his hand.

The visitor, however, placed his finger on his

lip, saying in a low tone, "Not a word, Craven,* we are to be as strangers here."

The other instantly drew back again, with a smile; but William Lovet nodded to him gaily, and then followed his friend.

This little interlude had not caught the Elector's eye, for at that moment the Baron of Oberntraut passed before him, and bowing low, took his place amongst the gentlemen on the left.

Elizabeth, however, saw it, and smiled, and then whispered a word in her husband's ear. Frederic's eyes were immediately turned upon the young Englishmen, who were now within a few paces; and a look of pleasure came over his countenance, while he replied in a low tone to what his wife had said.

The next moment the chamberlain interposed with a low and formal bow, saying, "These are the gentlemen, your Highness; I know not how

* By some authors it is stated that Craven was not at this time at the electoral court; but of course the chronicle which we copy is the better authority.

else to introduce them to you, as they do not think fit to grace me with their names; but your pleasure being that they should have admittance, I have obeyed you in bringing them to your presence." This said in a grave and formal tone, he drew back upon the prince's left.

"You are welcome, gentlemen," said Frederic. "Though you deny your name—and we will let that pass unquestioned—we must, as sovereign of this land, inquire what brings you hither: having due regard for the safety of our subjects, to the fairer part of whom, methinks, you might prove dangerous."

While he spoke, a playful and good-humoured smile curled his lip; and Algernon Grey answered in a respectful but yet gay tone; "I must reply to your Highness with one of our English players,—

'A roving disposition, good my lord.'

Such was the evil cause that brought us to the fair Palatinate. Being there, we heard that this day your Highness held a high revel,

and, longing to see the wonders of this court, we ventured hither, craving leave to tread a measure with any fair dame who will so honour us."

"I fear me much," said Frederic, in the same tone of courteous jesting, "that you are two perilous young men."

"He, my lord, is perilous young," replied Lovet, pointing to his companion; "God send that I may have a good title to the same character for the next twenty years; but, I doubt me much, it is passing away from me."

"We are all upon a road where there are no inns," answered the Elector, somewhat more gravely; "but what I fear is, that you bring danger with you, and I doubt much that I must order you into confinement, unless you can find bail and surety."

"Nay, my good lord, I will be their bail," cried Elizabeth of England gaily; "and to make all sure, I will put them in gentle ward, so that they commit no offence while in your

dominions.—Here, Agnes,” she continued, “and you, my fair Countess of Laussitz, you shall be their warders, and remember, that, throughout this whole night, whether in the dance or at the table, in the halls or in the gardens, you lose not sight of your several prisoners for a moment. Stay,” she continued, “although my good lord is inclined to treat them thus severely, I will be more gentle, as becomes a lady, and let each choose into whose captivity he will fall. What say you, sir?”

“By your Highness’s gracious permission,” replied Algernon Grey, to whom her words were addressed, “as there can be no want of gallantry in a choice where I know neither, I will surrender myself to the lady you first mentioned.”

“That is you, Agnes,” said the Electress; “come forward and take possession of your prisoner.”

As the princess spoke, a young lady, who stood a little behind, advanced with a light step, but with some slight timidity of manner,

and a cheek more flushed than it was the moment before. The timidity, however, appeared but to add new grace to that which, even before, seemed perfect; and Algernon Grey gazed upon her in evident surprise and admiration, feeling himself right happy in his choice.

It is very difficult to convey in language any just idea of those various distinctions and shades of beauty, which the eye seizes in a moment, but which escape from words; and it would be almost doing injustice to the fair girl, who now approached the princess's side, to attempt a detailed description. To give some idea, however, of her person, as the portraits, still existing, represent her, it may be enough to say, that she was certainly not above the middle height, but with every limb so exquisitely formed, that she looked taller than she really was. Her rich brown hair, with chestnut gleams upon it, fell in profuse abundance down her neck, in the fashion of the day. Her eyes were neither blue, nor

brown, nor grey, but of that soft and soul-speaking hazel, so rarely seen and yet so exquisitely beautiful; while the long dark eyelash and arched brow lent themselves to every shade of expression, from deep and pensive thought to light and sparkling gaiety. The features were all small and delicate, the skin pure as alabaster, with a sunset glow upon the cheek. And the slightly parted lips, showing the pearly teeth beneath, seemed tempting love and promising return. The small, fine hand, the beautifully formed foot and ankle, the graceful neck and swelling bosom, the very turn of the head, all seemed like the dream of a sculptor in some moment of inspiration. And to crown all, was that breathing of the soul through every feature and through every part, which invests each movement with some new charm.

Algernon Grey gazed upon her, I have said, with a look of admiration and surprise; and the keener and shrewder eye of William Lovet, too, ran over her face and figure, but with a very

different expression. It lasted but for a moment, and then he turned his gaze upon his friend, marking well the gleam of surprise that sparkled on his countenance. A slight smile curled his lips; but, when Algernon Grey advanced and took her hand, at the Princess's command, those lips moved; and, had any one been near, he might have heard him say, in a low tone, "This will do, methinks."

Another eye, too, marked the whole proceeding; but, in this instance, the brow became clouded, the moment the young Englishman's hand touched that of his fair companion; and, setting his teeth hard in his lower lip, the Baron of Oberntraut turned away his head, as if not to expose the discontent which was too plainly written on his face.

"I am ready, may it please your Highness," said William Lovet, advancing as soon as Algernon and his partner had drawn back, "to submit myself entirely to your high commands; but I do beseech you to lighten my chains by making them of roses, and bidding

my fair gaoler issue her orders in French, English, or Italian, as I fear my purse is very empty of German coin; and if she have none other, the exchange would be much against me."

"Fear not," replied the Princess; "we all speak French here. Come, fair Countess, take your prisoner, treat him well, but watch him carefully; and, to amuse his sad hours of captivity, show him all that is worth seeing in our humble court."

The lady, to whom she spoke, was in the first rank of those on her right; and William Lovet had no cause for dissatisfaction with his fate for the evening. The lady was tall and fair, but sparkling with beauty and youth; and a merry mouth, a sleepy and love-languid eye presented to his imagination all those qualities best suited to his taste. He was speedily in full career of jest and gallantry with his fair companion, and seemed at first to make more progress with her than Algernon Grey could boast with his partner for the night.

After a pause of a few moments, the Elector

turned to the Marshall of his household, and asked if any more guests were arriving or expected. The reply was "None;" and waving his hand, the Prince said in a gay tone; "Then, let us break off our state, and, for an hour or two, enjoy ourselves with the rest. Lords and ladies, to your several pastimes; and, according to a proverb, which I learned in England, let us all be merry and wise."

Thus saying, he drew the arm of the Electress through his own, and moved towards the doors of the hall. His departure was a signal for the dispersion of the court; the ceremonial part of the evening's occupations was at an end; and—ranging through the long suite of rooms which had been thrown open, going forth into the gardens and terraces—in general brightly illuminated by painted lanterns—some seeking the dance, some conversation—each endeavoured to amuse himself as best he might upon that night of festivity and rejoicing.

CHAPTER III.

THE fate that hangs over the death-doomed race of man appals us not. We wander where generations have grown up and bloomed, borne fruit, and passed away, without a homily in our hearts; we tread upon the very graves of a thousand races, we walk over the huge burial place of the world, and give not a thought to the fellow dust that sleeps below. Strange and marvellous insensibility! whence does it spring? Is it from mere levity that we thus rise above the deep thoughts of our inevitable doom? Or is it from a high sense of loftier destinies, an intimate conviction of the imperishable elevation of one part of our mixed

nature? Or is it indeed—more likely than either—that while we see the spring of life still gushing forth and pouring out stream after stream as each river is dried up, a consciousness steels over us that we are but the parts of one beautiful whole undergoing everlasting change to the glory of Him who made it all? We behold creation full of life: the herb, the flower, the beating heart, the pliant fin, the soaring wing, the thought-stored brain, all speak of that strange mysterious fire which warms the universe, bursting out wherever eye can reach or fancy penetrate, unextinguished, unextinguishable but by the will that called it into being. We see, and know it; and, instinct with the divine essence, rejoice in the light that is granted, for the time that it can be enjoyed, while the promise of its permanence and the hope of its increase shade over *the one dark moment* with a veil of gold.

Amidst buildings, that are now ruins, through scenes that are in a great part desolate, over terraces and amongst parterres, now no longer

to be seen, was kept up, throughout that night, revel and merriment and joy, without a thought given to the ages passed away, or to those who had been denizens of earth and partakers of all earth's pleasures, upon that same spot for unnumbered centuries before. The present hour, the present hour ! the joy of the existing short-lived moment ! the taste of the ripe fruit, without the cloud of the past or the sun of the future ! were then, are still, and may be for ever hereafter, the sole occupation of the gay and happy spirits, such as the guests there assembled.

It was too much so indeed ; for, in those young days of bright domestic happiness, Elizabeth of England and her joyous, lighthearted husband drained to the dregs the joy-cup of prosperity and power ; and, educated in the ideas of, though differing in views from the queen of James the First, the Electress was strongly tinged with those notions of freedom bordering upon levity, which were entertained by Ann of Denmark. Not that I mean for one moment to cast a stain upon a name, with which

history has dealt justly, I believe, in dealing tenderly; but it is undoubted, that the Electress, if sufficiently reserved in her own manners, and perfectly pure in her own conduct, gave great encouragement, in the court of her husband, to that abandonment of ordinary and conventional restraints, which can only be safe amongst the highminded and the chivalrous, and not always even then. She held with Ann of Denmark, that women had as much right, and might be as safely trusted with the entire and unwatched direction of their own actions, as men; that those harsh restrictions and suspicious guardianships, which have grown up out of a complicated and artificial state of society, might well and wisely be dispensed with; and that the sole cause of there being any danger to woman herself, or to the world in general, from allowing her the same freedom, which man monopolizes, was the early restraint, which denied experience, as the guide of reason and the demonstration of principle.

Thus a degree of freedom—I will not call it

license, for that is a harsh term, and implies according to modern acceptation, much more than I mean—reigned in the electoral court; and, although more than seven hundred guests were there assembled on the night I speak of, in addition to the noble part of a household numbering constantly more than a thousand members, no one, unless from some private and peculiar reason, thought it in the least necessary to watch the proceedings of others, whether male or female. Doubtless the Electress was right in many of the views she maintained, abstractedly speaking; but unfortunately it happens, that to every theory, however just in itself, certain small practical circumstances oppose themselves, affecting its application most momentously. I will illustrate, in some degree, what I mean. Formerly, in the silver mines of Spain, as at present in the soil of Illyria, I believe, a certain mineral was to be found very much resembling silver in colour—weighty, bright and fluid. Taken in its native state, it is innocuous and very inefficient; but add a few

drops of a certain nearly colourless acid to it, and it becomes a valuable medicine ; add a few drops of another acid, and it becomes the most virulent of poisons. Now the small circumstances, for which no allowance is ever made, are the few drops of acid, which in the furnace of the world render the most innocent theory possible, either highly beneficial, or terribly pernicious. I speak not, of course, of principles, for they are fixed ; but merely of theories at first sight indifferent.

However, such as I have stated, was the Court of the Elector Palatine in the year one thousand six hundred and nineteen, and in the month of August in that year : a period pregnant with great events, when the fate of the Palatinate—nay, the fate of Europe—nay, immeasurably more, the progress of society and the march of the human mind throughout the whole world, hung trembling in the balance ; and yet there they were, the gay, the light-hearted, the enthusiastic, the moveable, all, apparently, creatures of impulse alike, enjoying

with less restraint, than the world had often seen before, the happiness of the present hour. Music and the dance, gay conversation, light jest and playful wit had excited heads and hearts alike. The heat of the saloons had become oppressive ; the glare of the lamps and tapers had dazzled and fatigued the eyes ; the moving objects, the brilliant dresses, the beaming jewels, the straining race after pleasure, had become fatiguing to many ; and some forty or fifty pairs, hand in hand, or arm in arm, had wandered out to seek the refreshing coolness of the gardens, to repose the mind, and invigorate the body in the fresh night air of August, or else to tell the tale of love and seek its return, under the broad green foliage of the trees, or the twinkling eyes of the deep blue sky of night.

Algernon Grey and his fair companion stood side by side in one of the deep windows of the hall where they had trod one dance, and he marked the disappearance of many, who had been for some time in the same chamber, by doors which led he knew not whither. Had the

lady remained as timidly distant as when first they met, perhaps he might have asked no questions in regard to a subject which only excited a slight and passing curiosity; but a change had come over them both.

It was seldom that Algernon Grey felt embarrassment or hesitation in addressing the brightest or the fairest in the world. From a period, generally reckoned within the round of boyhood, he had acted for himself, except in some matters of deep moment; and, in regard to those, the arrangements which had been made for him by his friends, had, by fixing his fate, in several of its most important features, irrevocably placed him beyond the circle of many events most fraught with emotion for the heart of youth. But yet, there is something very impressive in great beauty, especially in its first early dawn. With the mature woman, there are a thousand avenues opened by her own experience, to approach her fearlessly, if honestly. But the mind of a very young girl, like the first bud of a rose, is hedged in by thorns, through which we

must force our way. In one of the German editions of a fairy tale, called the "Sleeping Beauty in the wood," the knight, who is destined to deliver the lady, has first to cut his path through the forest before he can even approach the castle in which she lies slumbering ; and he never would have succeeded, had it not been for an enchanted sword given him by a kind friend. I cannot help thinking, that in the allegory, the Sleeping Beauty meant the confidence of a young and inexperienced heart ; and the sword which none of the trees could resist, a high and noble spirit, possessed by one who sought to approach it. With such a sword Algeron Grey was armed ; and, although he found some difficulty in choosing his path, fortune befriended him at length. After two vain efforts which produced nothing in reply, but those common-places, which showed that the lady was accustomed, more than her years would have induced him to expect, to courts and the world, he hit upon a happier theme, which obtained a longer answer and touched deeper feelings.

He had spoken of the Electoral court, he had spoken of the fair Palatinate, he had spoken of the Elector and Electress. Her replies were courtly, but from the surface. He then spoke of England, of his own land, of the qualities of the people, their truthfulness, their energy of character; and she warmed in an instant. She often longed to see it, she said. She told him that it was the cherished vision of her lonely moments, the hope of her heart, the only eager and anxious desire she had; and when he expressed his surprise that the distant island from which he came, could have awakened such interest, she asked with a smile:—

“Do you not know that I am an English-woman? I have never seen England, I have never known it; but yet I am an English-woman.”

“Indeed,” he said, instantly changing the language in which they had been speaking to his own; “of English parents, you mean? I can well conceive the land of our ancestors possesses a deep interest for any one born afar,

out yet, fair lady, you must be somewhat of an enthusiast, also, to say that it is the only hope of your heart?"

"Perhaps I am," she answered with a smile, "but yet there is something more in the thought of England, than the mere clinging of the heart to the place of a long ancestry. Her very insulated situation seems to impose upon her children, as a duty, to limit, in a degree, their wishes and their feelings to the bounds of her sea-washed shores. There is an interest in her solitary grandeur amongst the waves. Then too, she has ever been the island-throne from which a long race of mighty kings has shaken the destinies of all other lands, and ruled or changed a world. History is full of England. It seems, to my eyes, as if hers were the pervading spirit of all past chronicles—as if, like an awful spectre, her image was always present amidst the festivals and feuds of other states. Calm, grand, and sublime, she treads the waters of earthly strife; and, while others are contending for petty trifles amongst themselves, losing

one day, winning another, the power and glory of England marches on, if not unchecked, only the greater for each temporary reverse. Freedom is her birth-right, home joys and rural peace her ornaments; arts, arms, and poetry, the coronet on her brow. Oh! it is a glorious land, indeed, and let them call us proud, if they will! Thank God! we have something to be proud of."

Her eyes sparkled, her colour rose, her whole face beamed with animation as she spoke; and Algernon Grey gazed at her with an admiring smile. Perhaps he might fear that under the monarch then on the English throne, their country might lose, for a time, that high position in which her fancy placed it; but, at all events, the few words then spoken broke down at once all cold barriers of reserve between them; and from that moment they went on pouring forth the thoughts of their hearts to each other, as if long years of intimacy had linked their minds together.

"Whither are all these people wending, that I see depart?" asked Algernon Grey, at

length, as he marked the gradual thinning of the rooms. "I trust this bright evening is not coming to a close?"

"Oh, no," she answered, "not for hours. They are going to the gardens, I suppose, or anywhere they like. This is a free and liberal place, fair sir, where each one does as he thinks fit, and others mind him not."

"I would fain see these same gardens," said her companion, "if they be within the bounds of my imprisonment."

"Come, then," she said, "why should we not? These rooms are very warm, too; and we shall find fresher air without. Through that door, and then down the stairs, will lead us out by the library-tower, amongst the flowers and the green trees."

As she spoke, they moved towards the door, to which she pointed; and they had nearly reached it, when the Baron of Oberntraut crossed their path, and suddenly paused before them.

"I have lost my bet, sir," he said, in a

somewhat sharp tone, "and will send you the amount to your inn to-morrow."

"Oh, it matters not," answered Algernon Grey; "it was a foolish wager of mine, and I can hardly call it fairly won; for I suspect, by a smile I saw on your Prince's lip, that he remembers having seen me in my own land, though I was but a mere boy then."

"I always pay my debts of all kinds, sir," replied the other; and then, turning to the lady, he asked her to tread a measure with him, when the dance began again.

"I cannot, noble sir," she replied coldly; "I have a task assigned me, which I must perform. You heard the commands I received."

"Commands right willingly obeyed," answered Oberntrant; and, turning sharply away, he left them.

"He is in an ill humour," said Algernon Grey, as, passing through two or three rooms nearly deserted, they reached the top of a small staircase, that led down towards the gardens. "He reasonably enough made me a bet, that I would

not obtain admission here, without announcing my name or rank. I unreasonably proffered it, and, against probability, have won."

"He is more wounded," answered Alice, "at his judgment having been found in fault, than at the loss of the wager, be the amount what it will. He is a liberal, free-hearted gentleman, whom success, high birth, and flattery have rendered somewhat vain; but yet, from all I hear and all I have ever seen, I should judge that at heart there are few nobler or better men now living."

Algernon Grey mused for a moment; he knew not why, but her words gave him pain; and they passed out, in silence, into the gardens, then newly laid out by the famous Salomon de Caux. Nothing that profuse expense and the taste and science of the day could effect, had been left undone to render those gardens a miracle of art. Mountains had been thrown down; valleys had been filled up; streams had been turned from their course; and terrace above terrace, parterre

beyond parterre, fountains, grottos, statues, arcades, presented a scene somewhat stiff and formal, indeed, but of a gorgeous and splendid character ; whilst, sweeping round, as if covering them with a green mantle, came the mountains and forests of the Neckarthal. There were lamps in many places, but such artificial light was little needed ; for the moon, within a few days of her full, was pouring a flood of splendour over the scene, which showed even minute objects around. So bright and beautiful was it, so white was the reflection from leaves and gravel walks, and the fresh stonework of the garden, that, had not the warm air told the presence of summer, Algernon Grey might have fancied that snow had fallen since he entered the castle gates.

Numerous groups of persons were wandering hither and thither ; and the very colours of their clothing could be seen under the beams of the bright moon. Among the very first of the gay parties, which passed the young Englishman and his companion, as they walked along the upper

terrace, towards the broad flight of steps that led down into the lower garden, was his gay friend, William Lovet, walking with the lady who had been assigned as his guide through the night. Right merry they both seemed to be; and we may as well follow them for a moment or two, to show the contrast between Lovet and his fellow-traveller.

“Love and constancy,” cried Lovet, with a laugh, just as they passed Algernon Grey, “two things, dear lady, perfectly incompatible. The very essence of love is in change; and you know, in your heart, that you feel it. It is but that you wish to bind all your slaves to you by chains of iron, while you yourself roam free.”

“Chains of brass would suit such an impudent man as you better,” answered the lady, in the same gay tone; “but I can tell you, I will have no lovers who will not vow eternal constancy.”

“Oh! I will vow,” answered Lovet, “as much as you like; I have got a stock of vows, which, like the fountain of the Nile, is inexhaustible;

and ever goes on swelling in the summer; I'll overflow with vows, if that be all; I'll adjure, protest, swear, kneel, sigh, weep, and vow again, as much as any true knight in Christendom. You shall believe me as constant as the moon, the sea, or the wind, or any other fixed and steadfast thing—nay, the moon is the best image, after all; for she, like me, is constant in inconstancy. Still hovering round the planet of her love, though she changes every hour; and so will I. I will love you ever dearly, though I vary with each varying day."

"And love a dozen others every day," answered the lady, laughing.

"To be sure," he cried; "mine is a large and capacious heart; no narrow peasant's crib, which can contain but one. Fie on such penury! I would not be such a poor pitiful creature, as to have room but for one fair friend in my bosom, for all the riches of Solomon, that great king of innumerable wives and wisdom super-excellent. For me,

I make it an open profession ; I love the whole sex, especially while they are young and pretty."

"You are laughing at me and trying to tease me," exclaimed the lady, piqued and yet pleased; "but you cannot do it, and never shall. You may think yourself a very conquering person; but I set no value on love that, like a beggar's garment, has fitted thousands in its day, and must be patched and ragged."

"Good as new, good as new!" cried Lovet, "without break or flaw. The trials it has undergone but prove its excellence. Love is of adamant, polished but not broken by use. But you dare me, dear lady—you defy me, methinks. Now that is a bold and courageous act; and we will see the result. No fortress so strong but it has some weak point, and the castle that fires off its ordnance at the first sight of an enemy, is generally very much afraid of being taken by surprise. The little traitor is busy at your heart, even now, whispering that there is danger; for he knows right well that the best

means of reducing a place, is to spread a panic in the garrison."

In the mean while, the very name of love had only been mentioned once, between Agnes and Algernon. Their minds were busied, especially at first, with aught else on earth. He certainly thought her very beautiful; more beautiful, perhaps, than any one he had ever seen; but it was rather as an impression than a matter of reflection. He felt it, he could not but feel it; yet he did not pause upon the idea. For her part, neither did she think of his personal appearance. His countenance was one that pleased her; it seemed expressive of a noble heart and a fine intellect; she would have known him out of all the world, if she had met him years afterwards and had only seen him then but once. Yet, had she been asked to describe his person, she could not have told one feature of his face. When they reached the bottom of the flight of steps, they paused and looked up to the castle, as it stood upon its rock above, with the enormous masses and towers standing

out dark and irregular in the moonlight sky ; while the hills swept in grand variety around, and the valley opened out beyond, showing the plain of the Rhine flooded with moonlight.

“ This is, indeed, magnificent and beautiful,” said Algernon Grey. “ I have seen many lands, and, certainly, never did I think to behold in this remote and untravelled part, a scene which eclipses all that I ever beheld before.”

“ It is very beautiful,” answered Agnes ; “ and although I have been a tenant of that castle now many a year, I find that the fair land in which it lies, like the society of the good and bright, only gains by long acquaintance. To me, however, it has charms it cannot have to you. There dwell those I have loved best through life, there all who have been kind to me in childhood : the protectors of my infancy, the friends of my youth. It has more to me than the scene and its beauties ; and when I gaze at the castle, or let my eye run along the valley, I see through the whole the happy home, the pleasant place of repose. Faces of friends look out at

me from every window and every glade, and loved voices sound on every breeze. They are not many; but they are sweet to my heart."

"And I, too," answered Algernon Grey, "though I can see none of these things that you can see, behold much more than the mere lines and tints. As I entered the court but an hour or two ago, and looked up at the various piles that crowded round, some in the freshness of a holiday youth in his best clothes sent home from school, some in the russet livery of age, and some almost crumbling to their earth again, I could not but picture to myself the many scenes which those walls have beheld; the loves, the hopes, the pleasures, the griefs, the disappointment, the despair, the troublous passions, the calm domestic joys—even the pleasant moments of dreamy idleness, and the phantasm-forming hours of twilight—all that the past has seen upon this spot seemed to rise before me in tangible forms, and sweep across in long procession with smiles and tears alternate on their cheeks; and all the while the musicians

under the stone canopy, appeared in their gay and spirit stirring tones to read a curious comment on the whole."

"What might their comment be?" asked the lady, gazing up in his face with a look of interest.

"They seemed to say," he answered, "Joy thou too, young heart! All is transient, all are shadows. Taste thy morning in its prime. Be thy noontide firm and strong, strew thine evening path with flowers, embrace the right, eschew the wrong, and fear not when the coming hours shall gather thee to join that train which sweeps along."

"Why, it is verse!" cried Agnes, smiling.

"Not quite," he answered, "but so fancy made their sounds, words; and the cadence of the music added a sort of measure."

"'T was sweet counsel and good of that kind dame, Imagination," rejoined the fair girl, "and yet, though the command was to be gay, your words, fair sir, are somewhat sad."

"Let us be gay then," he replied.

“With all my heart,” she cried: “but what shall we be gay about?”

“Nay, if we have to search for a theme, better be as we are,” answered the young Englishman, “nature is ever best; the mood of the moment is the only one that is worth having, because it is the only one that is true. It will change when it is time. But you are by nature gay, is it not so?”

“Oh, yes!” she answered, “I am gay as a free bird. Nay, good Dr. Scultetus, the court chaplain, would persuade me often I am light—but methinks not that; for I have felt many things long and deeply.”

“And amongst them, love?” asked her companion.

“Oh, yes!” replied she, in a frank yet playful tone, “I have loved deeply and truly.”

Algernon Grey was silent for a moment. He would have given much to have asked, “Whom?” but he did not venture, and the next instant the beautiful girl went on in a tone that reproved him for the question he had put.

“I have loved my parents,” she said, “deeply and well—though one of them I cannot remember—I have loved my friends—I do love my princess.”

“It was not of such love I spoke,” he answered, gazing down at her earnestly.

“Then, I know no other,” she replied, “do you?”

“Oh, yes, many,” he said, laughing; “there is a warmer, a more sparkling, I might almost call it, a fiercer kind of love, which every man, who has mingled a good deal in the world, must have seen in its effects, if he have not experienced it in his person.—But I am not in a confessional,” continued he; “and so I shall say no more.”

“And yet you would put me in one,” she answered gaily; “but certainly when I go there, I will have a more reverend father-confessor; for methinks, you are given to asking questions, which I may not be inclined to answer.”

Her companion paused in meditation during

a moment or two ; for her words raised a certain degree of doubt in his mind, as to whether she belonged to the Protestant or to the Catholic party, who, at the time I write of, lived together in the various towns of Germany, rather enduring than tolerating each other. It seemed a night of frankness, however, when questions might be easily asked, which would be impertinent at a graver and more reserved moment ; and he demanded, at length, in a light tone : “Pray, tell me, before I say more, are you one of those who condemn all Protestants to fire and faggot here and in the other world, or of those who think the power of the Pope an intolerable burden and the doctrines of that church heretical?”

“Oh, I understand you,” she said, after a moment’s thought ; “you would ask of what religion I am, and laugh a little at both, to put your question in a form not uncivil to either. But if you needs must know, I will tell you thus much—I was born a Protestant.”

“*Born* a protestant !” Algernon Grey ex-

claimed; "that seems to me a new way of becoming one."

"Nay, I don't know," she answered; "I believe it is the way one-half the world receive their religion, whatever it may be."

"Right," he said, "right! You are right, and I was wrong—not only their religion, but half their views. You were born a Protestant, and so was I; but I must say, happy are those whose reason, when it becomes mature, confirms the principles they have received in their youth. So it has been with me; and, I trust, with you also."

"Nay, I do not know that my reason is mature," replied the lady, with a smile: "but everything I have thought and read leads me to think that I cannot be wrong. It seems to me that the religion, which was taught to fishermen by its Divine author, to be preached to all the world, may be well read, and studied unadorned, by the descendants of the world that then existed: it seems to me, that if priests married they were as likely to be as good priests,

and better men ; it seems to me, that when our religion teaches to confess our faults one to another, there was no thought of setting apart a particular order of men to be the registrars of all our wickedness, but rather to correct that stubborn pride which hardens us in evil, by inducing us to deny our guilt. Moreover, I think that the habit of bowing down before pieces of stone and wood, of praying to sinners like ourselves when they are dead, and of kissing solemnly a piece of ivory on a cross, is something very like idolatry.—But I know little of all these things. I read the Bible, and am convinced myself; and yet I cannot make up my mind to think that good men, with faith in a Saviour, will perish eternally because they judge differently. Now you have won from me an account of my faith; but pray do not tell any one; for half our clergy would think I was part papist, and the other half part fool.”

“ You have thought of these things deeply, at all events,” replied Algernon Grey, “ and that is something, where so few think at all.”

“Oh, one cannot help thinking of these things here, where one hears little else from morning till night; but I have thought of them, too, for other reasons,” she said more gravely. “One has need of consolations in this world, at times. There is but one true source from which they flow; and before we drink at that source, it is needful to ascertain if the stream be pure. Still we are very grave,” she continued: “Heaven help us! if they did but know in yon gay saloons of what we two here are talking in the gardens, they would open their eyes with wonder, and perhaps their lips with laughter.”

“Well, then, we will change our tone,” continued Algernon Grey; “come, let us range along those higher terraces, where I see a long line of arches, tall, and slim, and one beyond another, like the fragment of a Roman aqueduct striding across the valley.”

“Gladly,” she answered; “the air will be cooler there, for it is higher; and we shall have it all to ourselves; for the gay world of

the court will linger down here till the trumpets sound to supper. I love the high free air and solitude. One draws a finer breath upon the mountains, and I often wish I were an eagle to soar above their jagged tops and drink the breath of heaven itself. But here comes your gay companion, and the fair lady of Laussitz."

"Who may she be?" inquired the young Englishman.

"A very pretty lady, somewhat gay," replied his companion; "but you must forgive me, my good captive, if I tell you nought of the ladies of this court. In truth, I know very little; for I hear much that I do not believe, much that I cannot be sure of; and, though I see sometimes what I would not see, yet I would fain judge all charitably, and put no harsh construction on other people's acts."

As she spoke Lovet and the fair countess passed at some little distance; and certainly, to all appearance, he had made some progress to intimacy in a marvellous short space of time. She might be fatigued, it is true—it might be but an

idle habit she had gained ; but still, the arm that was passed through his let the fair hand drop till it met her left hand, which she had raised, and the round but taper fingers of either were intertwined together. The head, slightly inclined over the left shoulder, drooped somewhat forward, as if the eyes were cast upon the ground, while the ear was raised to catch his words. There was a languor in her figure and in her air, an ill-assured step, a certain feebleness, as if some powers of mind or body were failing. It was his voice spoke as they passed. “Nay, nonsense,” he said ; “these are all idle nothings, bugbears set up to make the grown children of the world good boys. Come, fair one, come ; do not assume a pettish anger that you do not feel. Love was made for such a heart as yours, and such an hour for love,” and, bending down his head, he added somewhat more.

“How dare you,” said the lady in a low voice, “on my life, you are too bold ; I will leave you, I will, indeed.”

But she did not leave him ; and, for more than an hour afterwards, they might be seen wandering about those gardens, arm in arm, affecting solitary places.

It is strange how often good and evil take nearly the same forms—how that which is bright and pure seeks the same scenes with all that is most opposite, but finds a different treasure there ; as the bee will draw honey from the aconite, whence others will extract the deadly poison. In the bland innocence of her heart, the bright being by Algernon Grey's side led him on to the most lonely parts of the garden, wandered with him where there was no eye to watch them ; and, mounting one high flight of steps after another, passed along the whole extent of that grand terrace, raised upon its stupendous arches, the encumbered remains of which may still be seen overhanging the valley of the Neckar. But there, at the verge, they paused, gazing forth on the moonlight scene around ; marking the manifold gradations of the shadow and the light, as

mass after mass of wood and castle, mountain and rock, city and plain, faded off into one gentle hue of grey mingled with gold. A thousand were the images called up in the minds of each, by the objects that their eyes beheld; a thousand were the associations and the allusions to which they gave birth. Wide and erratic as is ever the course of fancy, soaring into the heights of the highest heaven, and plunging into the deepest depths below, never, perhaps, had her wing seemed more untiring, more wild and eccentric, than with those two young hearts on that eventful night—eventful in every way to themselves, to those around them, to Europe, to the world, to the march of society, to the enlightenment of the human mind, to the eternal destinies of all man's race.

To what fundamental changes, in everything that affects man's best interests, did not that nineteenth of August give rise!

The destiny that hung above them, without their knowing it, seemed to have some

mysterious influence upon the minds and characters of both. The barrier of cold formality was broken down between them; each poured forth the thoughts of the bosom as to an old familiar friend. Agnes felt herself irresistibly impelled—carried away, she knew not how or why—to speak to her companion as she had never spoken to man before. She fancied it was, that she had, for the first time, found a spirit congenial to her own; and certain it is, that there is a magic in the first touch of sympathy, which awakens sleeping powers in the heart, develops undiscovered stores of thought and feeling, and brings to light the bright things of the soul. But surely there was something more in it than this. Upon that hour, upon that moment hung the destinies of each; though neither had one thought that such could be the case, though of all things it seemed the most improbable, though he was a wandering stranger, purposing but to stop a few days in the place; and she seemed fixed down to it and its as-

sociations for life. Yet so it was; and had aught been different between them; had she remained in the mere timidity of the young girl, or in the cold courtesy of new acquaintance; had he maintained the usual proud and lofty air which he assumed in general with women, how different would have been their fate through life! The varied scenes through which they were to pass, the distant lands which they were destined to visit, would never have beheld them together; and that night would have been but a pleasant dream, to be recollected amidst the dull realities of life.

It was otherwise, however. She was so young, so gentle, so bright, so beautiful, that her society acted as a charm, waking him from a sort of dull and heavy torpor which had been cast over his heart by an event that had taken place in his boyhood—a counter-spell, which dissipated one that had chained up the current of his youthful blood in cold and icy bonds. He gave way to all he felt, to all the pleasure of the moment. Their conversation

freed itself from all ceremonious shackles ; both seemed to feel that they could trust fully in each other, and spoke, as feeling dictated, with no reserve and no misunderstanding. The flight of thought became gayer, too, naturally and easily ; and as Agnes gave way to the high and buoyant spirit of youth, her young fancies soared and twinkled, like the wings of a lark in the sunshine ; while Algernon Grey, with a firmer and more steady flight, seemed like a spirit beside her spirit, guiding her on, higher and higher, into the world of space open to the human mind.

Suddenly, as they thus rambled on together, through the remote parts of the gardens, they heard the sounds of distant trumpets, blowing clear and loud ; and Agnes, with a start, turned to her companion, saying : “ That is the call to supper. Our evening is coming to an end ; do not think me too strange and free, if I say that I am sorry for it.”

“ Nay,” answered he, “ why should I think you so, when I, with far more cause, feel the

same most deeply. We may, perhaps, never meet again, fair lady ; but I shall always remember this night as one undimmed in its brightness, without a spot to chequer it, without a shade, or a regret. I do think you free and at ease ; more so, perhaps, than I expected ; more so than many would have been, older in the world's ways than yourself—but not too free ; and I can well conceive that the long sojourn in a court like this has removed all cold restraint from your manner.”

“ Oh, no,” she said, “ it is not that ! I never mingle with the court when I can help it. The ease I have shown to-night has depended, partly on myself, partly on you.”

“ Let me hear more,” he answered ; “ I do not clearly understand you.”

“ Well, then,” she said, “ I am habitually free and at ease ; because I am sure of myself—because I feel that I never mean wrong ; and do not know that I have any thoughts I could wish to conceal. Let those who doubt themselves fear to show their heart as it is ; thanks

to wise friends and careful guidance, mine has no part that may not be open. Then, as to your share: you have treated me in a manner different from that which most men would assume to most women. I could scarcely lay my finger upon one of all that court, who, sent with me, like you, throughout this night, would not have tried to please my ear with tales of love and praises of my beauty, long, stupid, and insignificant as a cricket on the hearth. Had you done so, my manner might have been very different."

Her companion did not reply for a moment or two; but then said, with a smile: "It seems to me that there must be something both vain and insulting in supposing that a woman will willingly listen to tales of love from a man who has known her but a few hours—he must think her very light and himself very captivating."

"We poor women," she answered, "are bound to gratitude towards your sex, even for forbearance; and therefore, it is, I thank you for not having held me so lightly."

“I am far more than repaid,” he rejoined, as she guided him down the steps into the lower garden, saying that they must hasten on, and that was the shortest way.

Passing round under the high banks formed by the casting down of a great part of the hill, called the Friesenberg, they had crossed one half of the gardens and were walking on at a spot where the shadow of one of the great towers fell deep upon the green turf, when suddenly a tall figure seemed to rise out of the earth close beside them, passed them, and disappeared. For an instant the lady clung to her companion's arm as if in terror; but then, the moment after, she laughed gaily, saying: “This place has so many superstitious legends attached to it that they cling to one's fancy whether one will or not. If I ever see you again, I will tell you one about this very spot; but we have not time now; for in ten minutes after that trumpet-sound, the Elector will be at table.”

We will not go on to visit the banquet that followed, to contemplate its splendour, or criti-

cise the ceremonies there observed. It were an easy matter to describe it, for we have many a dull relation of many a gay feast of the time ; but, in this work, I have not in view to paint the mere customs and manners of the age, except incidentally, but rather to show man's heart and feelings undisguised, and exhibit their true proportions, stripped of a gaudy but disfiguring robe of ceremony.

CHAPTER IV.

How often an aching head or an aching heart is the follower of a gay night like that of the nineteenth of August, those who have much mingled with, or much watched, the world well know. In the commerce of life we are too apt to reverse the usual course of all reasonable traffic, and purchase with short present pleasure a vast amount of future grief and care. The bargain is a bad one, but made every day; and even at the table, in the ball-room, and in many another scene, this same losing trade is going on, with the bitter day of reckoning on the morrow.

How is it with Algernon Grey, as he sits there in the large gloomy chamber, with his

head leaning on his hand, his eyes gazing vacantly forth through the narrow window? The servants come and go; and he notices them not. The table is laid for breakfast, but the meal remains untasted. Busy sounds rise up from without and float through the half open casement; the gay and cheering laugh, the light song, the chattered conversation, the cry of the vender of early grapes, the grating noise of wheels, or that of horses' feet, and through the whole a lively hum, indistinct but merry to the ear. Nevertheless, he hears not a sound, buried in the deep thoughts of his own heart.

Is it that the brow is aching? or that languor and feverish heat reign in those strong and graceful limbs? Oh, no. The whole frame is free from pain; fresh, vigorous, and fit for instant action. Is there any word, spoken the night before, any deed done, that he would recall, yet cannot? Not so. He has nought to reproach himself with; conscience has no accusing voice.

What is it then? He communes with his

own heart; and a dark overshadowing cloud comes between him and the sun of happiness. It is a shadow from the past; but it extends over all the present, and far and vague into the future.

The first thing that roused him, was the entrance of his gay friend, William Lovet, who came to share the meal with him. Nevertheless, Algernon did not perceive his approach, till he was close to him, and laid his hand upon his shoulder, saying:—

“Heaven and earth, Algernon! what has made thee so moody, man? There must be something in the air of this foul city, that—with such a bright vision as that of last night to gladden your way—one stain of care should be found upon your brow.”

His friend roused himself instantly, and answered gaily, though not without an effort: “I must think sometimes, William; it is a part of my nature. One little drop of thought fell into my clay when it was kneading. Thank your stars that none such entered into your composition.—

But let us to breakfast, my appetite tells me that the hour has somewhat passed."

"Appetite," cried Lovet, taking his seat; "tell not the bright-eyed Agnes of your having so coarse and vulgar a thing. She will think your love forsworn and all your fidelity false and fickle, if you do more than eat one slice out of that partridge breast, or drink aught but sour Rhenish throughout the day. But seriously, and upon my life, with solemn earnestness, I do declare, never was such a glorious chance as has fallen to the lot of each of us. Had we culled the whole court, I fancy, we could have found nought more charming; and we must stay here at least a month, to profit by Dame Fortune's favours."

"A very sweet companion I had," answered Algernon Grey, coldly; "but no vows did I make, no fidelity did I swear, my good friend."

"Heaven and earth!" cried Lovet, "did one ever hear of such a thing as a man travelling with another upon equal terms, and yet leaving him all the hard work to do? Swear! why I

swore till my joints ached and my teeth were sadly damaged; and as to vows, two Dutch barks, broad in the bow, broad in the stern, and deep enough in the hold to hide ten Dutchmen upon an elephant, would not hold one-half of the cargo that I landed safely at yon lady's feet last night. Let me see, what is her name? I have it somewhere, written from her own sweet lips—Countess of Laussitz!—Matilda, too, by the mark! A good name, a marvellous good name, is it not, Algernon? Musical, pretty, soft, soothing, loveable. But never go anywhere without tablets! See what service mine have been to me! Many a fair prospect is spoiled by a mistake in the name. Call Matilda Joan, or Louisa Deborah, and you are ruined for ever;—Matilda, Countess of Laussitz! Charming! Sweet! Bless her soft eyes and her sweet lips; they are worth the best diamond in the Mogul's turban. And so you positively did not swear fidelity, nor vow vows? The lady must have thought you marvellously stupid."

While he had been speaking he had not failed to do justice to the good things on the table. Nor had Algernon Grey shown any lack of appetite, applying himself more stoutly to eat his breakfast than to answer his companion's light raillery. At length, however, he replied: "She did not seem to think so; or, perhaps, she was too courteous to express it; but, at all events, my evening spent with her was a very pleasant one, though neither love, nor vows, nor sighing, had any share therein."

"And yet, methinks, you went into very sighing places," answered Lovet, laughing; "you affected the groves and solitary terraces, as well as others, whom you wot of; and then linked arm in arm, with eyes cast down and sweet low voices, if something warmer than a prologue to a mystery, or a descant on the moon, did not enter into your gentle communion, methinks you must have been worse than Hecla; for, though it be all ice, they say, yet there is fire at the heart; and that girl's eyes and lips were enough to set any one's

blood in a flame, even if it were naturally cold as a toad's. Come, come, Algernon, no such reserve between us; let us speak freely of our loves, and we may help each other."

"On my life! William, I have none to speak of," answered his companion, warmly. "You may make love to whom you like, for you are free; but with me it is very different."

"Nonsense," exclaimed the other; "the circumstances are the same in both cases, only the position is reversed. If I am free, she is married; did you not see her husband there?—a fat, white-faced man, not so high as a musketoon. But what is that to me? The love of a month does not trouble itself about matrimony; and my great grandmother's starched ruff is, of all things, the emblem that I hate; for she dared not even kiss her daughter for fear of its crumpling. Why should you heed, either? A little pardonable polygamy is an excellent good receipt for keeping the taste fresh by constant variety. Heaven help me! if all my wives were counted throughout

the cities of civilized Europe, I fear I should have to transfer me to Turkey, and lodge next door to the Sublime Porte."

Algernon Grey smiled, whether he would or not, at his friend's account of himself, but still he answered seriously : " The case is this, William ; whatever I may judge I have a right to do myself ; there is one thing, I am sure, I have no right to do, which is, to make a young, gay, happy heart, unhappy, sad, and old,—ay, I say *old* ; for the touch of disappointed love is as withering as the hand of Time. No, no, I have no right to do that ! "

" Good faith ! you are most scrupulously wrong, my noble cousin," answered Lovet, " and do injustice both to yourself and others. Man, and woman too, were born for pleasure ; changing, varying, at each step we take. It is a sort of duty in my eyes to give every human being brought in contact with me whatever joy I can afford them ; and I should as much think of refusing a poor fellow a good dinner, for fear he should not have one to-morrow, as fail to

make love to a pretty lady who expects it ; because I cannot go on loving her all my life. Every woman has a pleasure in being made love to, and I say, Out upon the niggard who will not give her a share of it when he has the opportunity. Every man to his own whim, however ; for, after all, these are nought but whims, or the effects of a most pragmatistical education. But follow your own course, follow your own course, and go on picking the bare bone of a very musty morality, fancying it all the while venison and capon. Perhaps, after all, you are nought but a true and devoted knight and lover ; and the thought of the rare beauty you left four or five years ago in England, like a certain composition of salt and nitre in a pickling-pan, may be preserving you, uncorrupted as a neat's tongue, sound and safe, but somewhat hard and shrivelled withal. Well, she is a glorious creature, it must be confessed ; and I, being your cousin and hers too, may venture to confess, without suspicion of flattery, that rarely have I seen beauty equal to hers.

The bud has burst into the rose since you left it, and though there may be a thorn or two, the flower is well worth gathering."

Algernon Grey mused and answered in a thoughtful tone, as if arguing with himself. "Taste is a strange thing," he said, "marvellously strange! Who can give reason for his likings and dislikings?—and yet there must be some course of reasoning below them all. Or is it instinct, William, that teaches us instantly to appreciate and seek that which is suitable to ourselves? There are several kinds of beauty—"

"True, noble cousin," answered Lovet, in a bantering tone.

"Ay, but two very distinct classes into which all minor differences perhaps may be arranged," his friend continued.

"Perhaps so," rejoined the other; "let us hear more of the two ranks."

"Why there is first," replied Algernon Grey, "that sort of beauty which dazzles and surprises—brilliant and commanding, I think men

call it—the bold firm eye, the Juno frown, the look of fiery passion, sparkling as a diamond but as hard, bright as a sword but oftentimes as ready to wound. With me it alarms rather than attracts, rouses to resistance instead of subduing.”

“Go on,” said Lovet, in a quiet but meaning tone, “I understand.”

“Then there is the other sort,” his friend continued, “that which wins rather than triumphs; the gentle, the gay, more than the keen and bright; yielding to, rather than demanding love; the trusting, the confiding look, instead of the ruling and commanding; the lip where smiles seem to find their native home; the soft half-shaded eye full of veiled light, speaking at times the sportiveness of innocent thought, under which may lie, concealed against the time of need, higher and stronger powers of heart and mind.”

Lovet had become graver as his companion went on; and when he ended, replied with some warmth, “Ay, indeed, such beauty as

that might well win love for life, and he would be a fool who found it and let any idle obstacle prevent his purchase of so rare a jewel; but it is a dream of your fancy, Algernon. Imagination has laid on those delicate colours, and you will never see the original of the portrait. Each man has in his own heart his own image of perfection, always sought for but rarely found. If once he meets it, let him beware how it escapes him. He will never see its like again. I am no enthusiast, as you well know—I have seen too much of life; but here—all levity as you think me—did I find once the creature that fancy early drew as the companion of my days, and had hope of winning her love, I tell you, Algernon, there is not that consideration on the earth I would not cast behind me for the great joy of making her mine for ever: no, not one—rank, station, wealth, the world's esteem, all cold and formal dogmas, devised by knaves and listened to by fools. I would bend all to that. My own habitual lightness, the sneer and jest

of gay companions, the censure of the grave and reverend, the fear of outcry and invective, and all the idle babble of the world, would weigh but as a feather in the balance against the lifelong dream of happiness which such an union would call up."

When he had spoken—and he did so with fire and eagerness altogether unlike himself—he leaned his head upon his hand, and fell apparently into profound thought for several minutes. Algernon Grey, too, mused, and his meditation lasted longer than his companion's, for he was still in a deep reverie when Lovet started up, exclaiming, "But it is all in vain!—Come, Algernon, let us not think—it is the most irrational waste of time that can be devised. We are but Fate's monkeys. She keeps us here in this cage of earth and throws us what crumbs she will. Happy is he who catches them quickest. What are you for to-day? I am for the castle to worship at my little shrine, unless I hear from my saint to the contrary before the clock strikes eleven."

“Some time in the day I must go up, too,” replied his friend; “in courtesy, we must both do so to show our thankfulness for our kind reception; but before I go, I must away into the town to seek out worthy Dr. Henry Alting, this renowned professor, to whom my uncle, his old friend, sent me a letter by your hands.”

“Then, you may as well publish your name at the market-cross if there be one,” answered Lovet; “it will be given out from the chair of philosophy this morning, and over the whole town ere noon.”

“No, no,” replied the other, with a smile, “my uncle humours my whim—he is Astrea struck and loves all wild exploits. In his letter, I am but called his young kinsman, Master Algernon Grey, and the good doctor will be ignorant of all the rest.”

“Well, well, I care not,” answered Lovet; “it is no affair of mine. I transformed myself into William Lovet to please you, and though, certainly, the plan has its conveniences for every

one but the staid and most line-and-rule gentleman who devised it, yet I am ready to appear in my own feathers to-morrow should need be."

"Perhaps, thinking you will appear to more advantage, Will," replied Algernon Grey, with an effort to be gay ; "however, there is no fear. Our borrowed plumage will last as long as we may want it, if we take care not to soil our own feathers underneath."

"Now, *corpo di Baccho!*" cried Lovet, "I admire you again. That last morality in metaphor was worthy of a saint in orange tawny velvet, or my fair cousin, Algernon. I have hopes of you, whenever you begin to deal in tropes and figures. At least, you are not dull then, which is something. That glorious trio, wit, wisdom, and wantonness can then claim some share in you, and there is a chance of the man who has thrown away his youth and his youth's powers in cold asceticism, trying to warm his age with the fire of profligacy. It is a common case, and will be yours, Algernon, for the man

who commits not youthful follies, is sure in the end to take up with reverend vices.—But do you agree to my plan; a month here,—but one poor month; and if I win not my fair lady in that time, I shall be right ready to slink away like a cur that has been kicked out for attempting to steal a marrow-bone. You can attend lectures in the mean time, and learn from the skull-cap of old bald-headed Scultetus, to carry yourself evenly on slippery places.”

“Well, stay what time you like,” replied Algernon Grey. “If I find cause, I can go on a stage or two and wait for you. At present, I will forth to find out this renowned professor. Should you be gone ere my return, leave tidings of your doings for my guidance.”

Thus saying, he left him, and as he went, William Lovet gazed after him till the door was shut. Then a somewhat bitter smile curled his lip, and after a moment's thought, he muttered, “Limed! limed! or I am much mistaken.—Ay, ay, I know the sort of beauty that you

have so tenderly described.—A month! Stay but a month, and if I judge her right, and know man's heart, you are plunged in beyond recall.”

CHAPTER V.

PRECEDED by a Knecht, as he was called, of the inn, in a close-fitting jacket, wide brown breeches, and blue stockings, Algernon Grey walked through the narrow and tortuous streets of Heidelberg towards the residence of a man then renowned for his wit and wisdom, though we know not at the present day upon what this fame was founded. Although it was the custom in those times for gay gallants to ruffle through the streets with a long train of servants, badged, liveried, and armed, no one accompanied the young Englishman, except the man to show him the way. At that hour of the morning—it was now near eleven—few

persons were to be seen abroad ; for the student was busy at his book, the shopkeeper labouring in his vocation. Those who did appear, were all in their particular costume, distinctive of class and station. You could have laid your finger upon any man in the whole town and named at once his occupation from his dress. Nor was this custom, which assigned peculiar garments to each peculiar class, without many great advantages, besides the mere picturesque effect. But it is in vain to regret that these things have passed away ; they were parts of the spirit of that age, an age fond of distinctions ; and now in the fusion of all classes, which has taken place, where no distinctions are suffered to remain but that of wealth, the keeping up of peculiar costumes would be an idle shadow of a thing no longer existing.

Amidst close rows of tall houses—the narrow windows of which displayed no costly wares—and, here and there, through the rows of booths erected before the doors, in which the tradesmen were then accustomed to display their

goods for sale, Algernon Grey walked on for about five minutes, from time to time asking a question of his guide, who never replied without humbly doffing his little cap, and adding, "Honourable sir," or "Noble gentleman," to every sentence. It was another trait of the times and the country.

At length the man stopped at the open door of a tall dull looking house, and informed his companion, that he would find Dr. Alting on the second floor; and mounting the long, cold, broad steps of stone, Algernon Grey found his way up to the rooms of him he sought. A fresh, sturdy, starched servant wench, who instantly caught his foreign accent, and thereupon made up her mind not to understand a word he said, was at length brought to introduce him to the presence of her master; and following her along a narrow passage, the young Englishman was ushered into a room, such as the general appearance of the house had given little reason to expect. It was wide, handsome, overhung by a fine carved oak

ceiling, and furnished all round with large bookcases, richly carved, containing the treasured collection of a long life in every shape and form, from the enormous folio to the most minute duodecimo.

At a heavy oaken table, near one of the windows, sat two gentlemen, of different age and appearance. One was a man with white hair and beard, whose sixtieth summer would never come again. He was dressed in a long loose gown of some black stuff; and, on his head, which probably was bald, he wore a small crushed velvet cap. His face was fine and intelligent; and, from beneath the thick, overhanging eyebrow shone out a clear and sparkling eye.

The other was habited in a coat of buff leather, not very new, but laced with gold. His cloak was a plain, brown broad-cloth, a good deal fresher than his coat; and on his legs he wore a pair of those large funnel-shaped boots, which seemed intended to catch all the rain or dust that might fall or fly. His

heavy rapier lay along his thigh ; but beyond this he was unarmed ; and his hat with its single feather rested beside him. In age he might be about fifty. His strong black hair and pointed beard were somewhat grizzled ; but there was no sign of decay in form or feature. His teeth were fine and beautifully white ; his face rough with exposure, but not wrinkled ; his frame was strong, tall, and powerful ; and the bold contour of the swelling muscles could be seen through the tight sleeve of his coat. His face was a very pleasant one, grave but not stern, thoughtful but not sad ; and, as he turned sharply round in his chair at the opening of the door, a faint recollection of his features, as if he had seen them before, or some very like them, came across the young Englishman's mind.

With his usual calm self-possession, Algernon Grey advanced straight towards the seat of the gentleman in black, and, with a few words of introduction, presented a letter. Dr. Alting rose to receive him, and, for a single instant,

fixed his keen grey eyes upon his visitor's face with a look the most intent and searching. The glance was withdrawn almost as soon as given; and then, courteously putting forward a seat he opened the letter and read. The moment after he took Algernon's hand and shook it heartily, exclaiming, "So, sir, you are a kinsman of this good lord, my old and much respected friend. Ever to see him again is beyond my hopes; but it is something to have before me one of his race. What, if I may ask, brings you to Heidelberg? If you come in search of learning, here you can find it amongst my reverend brethren of the University. If in search of gaiety and pleasure, surely, above there, in the castle, you will have your heart's content; for a more merry body of light young hearts were seldom ever collected — good faith," he continued, turning to the gentleman who had been sitting with him when Algernon entered, "they kept their revel up full long last night. As I sat here at my studies—it must have been past

midnight—the music came down upon me in gusts, almost making even my old sober limbs tingle to go and join the merry dance, as I did in boyhood. It must have been a splendid scene.”

“This gentleman was there,” replied the other; “I saw him for an instant; but I stayed not long; for that music has another effect on me, my good old friend; and I betook me to my tower again, more in the spirit of the gloomy anchorite than yourself, it seems.”

“I passed the night there and part of the morning, too, I fear,” said Algernon Grey; “for it was two before we reached our inn.”

“I trust you had a happy night of it, then,” answered Dr. Alting; “such scenes are the property of youth; and it would be hard to deny to the young heart all the brief pleasures of which life has so few.”

“A far happier night,” answered Algernon Grey, “than many of those have been which I have spent in more powerful courts and

scenes as gay. There happened to me that which, in the chances of the world, rarely occurs, to have a companion for the night whose thoughts and feelings were wholly congenial to my own, a lady whose beauty, dazzling as it is, would have fallen upon my cold heart only like a ray of wintry sunshine on a frozen world, had it not been that, unlike every one I ever saw, a high pure spirit and a rich bright fancy left her beauty itself forgotten in their own transcendant lustre."

"You are an enthusiast, my young friend," said Dr. Alting, while the stranger fixed his eyes on Algernon Grey, with a gay smile; "what might be the name of this paragon?"

"The princess called her Agnes," answered the young Englishman; "and more I did not enquire."

A merry glance passed between the good professor and his companion; and the latter exclaimed, "You did not enquire! That seems strange, when you were so captivated."

"There is the mistake," said Algernon Grey,

laughing ; “ I was not captivated ; I admired, esteemed, approved, but that is all. Most likely she and I will never meet again ; for I shall wander for a year, and then return to duties in my own land ; and the name of Agnes is all I want, by which to remember a happy night of the very few I have ever known, and a being full of grace and goodness, whom I shall see no more.”

“ A strange philosophy,” cried Dr. Alting ; “ especially for so young a man.”

“ And so you wander for a year,” said the stranger ; “ if it be not a rash question, as it seems you are not seeking adventures in love, is it high deeds of arms you are in search of, like the ancient knights ? ”

“ Not so, either,” answered Algernon Grey ; “ although I am willing enough, should the occasion present itself, to serve under any honourable flag, where my religion is not an obstacle, as I have done more than once before.”

“ Ah ! ” said Dr. Alting, “ then you are one

of those—those very few, who will suffer their religion to be an obstacle to any of their plans.”

“Assuredly,” answered Algernon Grey. “The strife at present throughout the whole of Europe is, and must be ever more or less for the maintenance of the pure and unperverted religion of the Gospel against the barbarous superstitions and corruptions of the Romish church; and, whatever may be the pretext of war, whoever draws the sword in a papist army ——”

“Is fighting for the Woman of Babylon,” cried Dr. Alting, eagerly; “is setting himself up against the Cross of Christ, is advancing the banner of the Dragon, destined sooner or later to be thrown into the pit of the nethermost hell;” and, taking the young Englishman’s hand, he shook it heartily, exclaiming: “I am glad to hear such sentiments from the kinsman of my noble friend.”

“He entertains them as firmly as yourself, you well know,” answered Algernon Grey; “they

are common to all his family; and, for my part, humble as I am, I shall always be ready to draw the sword in the defence of right, whenever the opportunity is afforded me."

"It is coming, my dear sir, the time is coming," cried the old man. "Great events are before us; and I see for the first time the prospect of the true faith becoming predominant in this land of Germany; thence, I trust, to spread its holy and beneficial influence throughout the world. You have heard, doubtless you have heard, that in the very heart of this great empire, the people of Bohemia have raised the standard of freedom of conscience. Even now they are in deliberation to choose them a new king, in place of the papist tyrant, who has violated all the solemn pledges, by virtue of which alone he held the crown. If their choice be a wise and good one, if it be such as I believe it will be, if the head of the Protestant Union,—in a word—if the Elector Palatine be chosen King of Bohemia, doubtless the spirit of the true faith will, from that

moment, go forth with irresistible might, and shake the idolatrous church of the seven hills to its foundation. I look to it with confidence and trust: I look to every gallant spirit and faithful heart to come forward and take his share in the good work; and, with the name of the Lord on our side, there is no fear of the result."

The conversation proceeded for some time in the same strain. With eager fire, and with sometimes a not very reverend application of the words of Scripture, Dr. Alting went on to advance his own opinions, becoming more eager every moment, especially when the probability of the Elector Palatine being chosen as their king by the states of Bohemia was referred to.

The gentleman who was with him when Algernon Grey entered, took little part in the discussion, remaining grave and somewhat stern in look; though, from the few words he uttered, it was evident that his religious views were the same as those of his two companions. He

smiled, indeed, in turn at the different sorts of enthusiasm of the old man and the young one; and once Dr. Alting shook his finger at him good-humouredly, saying: "Ah! Herbert, you would have men believe you cold and stoical, and, for that purpose, in every affair of life you act like no other man; but I know the fire that is under it all."

"Fire enough, when it is needed," answered Herbert; "but only when it is needed, my good friend. If troops spend all their powder in firing salutes, they will have none to charge their cannon with in the day of battle; but as you are not expected to put on the cuirass, it is just as well that you should keep up men's spirits, and fix their determinations by your oratory. Only let me be quiet. You won't find me wanting when the time comes."

"I trust none will be wanting," said Algeron Grey; "but yet I cannot help feeling, that in this light-minded world, many whom we count upon rashly, may fall from us readily."

“Too true, too true,” said Herbert, shaking his head.

“I will not believe it,” cried Dr. Alting; “with such a prince, and such a cause, and such an object, every man, who has a particle of truth in his nature, will do his duty, I am sure; and let the false go—we can do without them.”

“You must add the weak, too, my reverend friend,” said Algernon Grey, rising to depart; “but still, I do think, and I do trust, that there are enough both firm and true in Europe, to accomplish this great task, unless some sad accident occur, or some great mistake be committed. We shall see, however; and in the mean time, farewell.”

Dr. Alting shook hands with him warmly, asked where he could find him, how long would be his stay in Heidelberg, and all those other questions which courtesy dictated: but perhaps the reverend doctor felt, in a degree not altogether pleasant, that his young friend, if not so learned a man as himself in books and parch-

ments, had another sort of learning—that of the world—which he himself did not possess.

The gentleman who had been called Herbert seemed to feel differently; and, when the young gentleman was about to depart, he rose, saying: “I will go with you, and perhaps may show you some things of interest.” Then bidding adieu to Dr. Alting, he followed Algernon Grey out of the room, and descended the stairs with him in silence. Under the shadow of the doorway they found waiting the Knecht, who had guided the young gentleman thither; but Herbert dismissed him, saying to his companion: “I will be your guide back. Shall we stroll along to the church, or visit some of the fortifications? Both are somewhat in your way it would seem.”

“Nay,” answered Algernon, “with the church I have little to do, except when my opinions are drawn forth by such a man as our learned friend; but I will go whithersoever you choose to lead me.”

“Well, then, we will stroll along and take

things as they come," answered Herbert ; " we can scarcely go amiss in this town and neighbourhood, for each step has its own particular interest, or its own beauty. It is a place I never weary of."

As he spoke they turned into one of the narrow streets that led up towards the hills, and were crossing the castle-road, in order to take a path through the woods, when Algernon Grey's quick ear caught the sound of a voice calling to him. Looking round, he saw a gentleman coming down with a hasty step, followed by two or three servants, and instantly recognised the Baron of Oberntraut. A feeling—I might almost call it a presentiment : one of those strange, inexplicable foresights of a coming event, which sometimes put us on our guard against approaching evil, made him say to his companion : " Oh ! this is the gentleman with whom I had a bet last night, I will rejoin you in a moment ;" and he advanced a step or two up the hill.

The next instant Oberntraut was by his side.

“I wish to speak a moment with you, sir,” he said.

Algernon Grey bowed his head and was silent.

“We had a bet last night,” continued the baron, with a flushed cheek but somewhat embarrassed air; “my servants are carrying down the amount to your inn.”

“Thanks,” answered Algernon Grey; “they will find some of my people there, to whom they can deliver it.”

“I always pay my debts, sir,” said Oberntraut; “but I rather think there is another account to be settled between us.”

“Indeed!” replied Algernon Grey, calmly; “I am not aware of it. What may it be?”

“Oh! sir, you assume ignorance!” rejoined the other in an insulting tone: “in a word, then, we do not suffer foreign gentlemen to come hither, win our money, and court our ladies, without making them pass through some ordeal. Do you understand me now?”

“Perfectly,” answered the young English-

man, with a slight smile ; “ such words are not to be mistaken ; and let me assure you, as I wish to see everybody pleased, I will not disappoint you ; but, at the same time, we may conduct a matter of this sort without warmth, and with all courtesy. I know not how I have aggrieved you ; but that I ask not : it is quite sufficient that you think yourself aggrieved, and I will give you such opportunity of redressing yourself as you may wish for.”

“ I thank you, sir,” replied the other in a more moderate tone ; “ when and where shall it be ? ”

“ Nay, that I must leave to you,” answered the young Englishman ; “ I will make but two conditions—that it be speedily, and that we embroil no others in our quarrel. I have but one friend here, and as he has been somewhat too famous in our own country for rencontres of this kind, I would fain spare him any share in an affair of mine.”

“ Be that as you like,” replied the baron ; “ on all accounts we shall be better alone : the

place must be one where we shall have no interruption.—Let me think?—Yes, that will do.—Will you meet me to-morrow on the bridge, each with a single page whom we can leave behind at our convenience? I will lead you to a spot secure and shaded from all eyes, where we shall have good turf and space enough.”

“Agreed,” answered Algernon Grey, “but why not this very day? I am quite prepared.”

“But I have a few hours’ journey to take first,” replied the baron; “no, in your courtesy let it be to-morrow; and the safest hour will be just before nightfall. Come a little earlier to the bridge, for we have some small distance to go,—with our swords alone—is it not so?”

“As you will,” said his companion. “Be it so then—in the grey I will not fail you—good-morning, sir;” and, turning round, he rejoined his new acquaintance Herbert, with an easy and unembarrassed air.

Herbert was not entirely deceived, however. He had been standing where the young English-

man left him at about five paces' distance, where the greater part of their conversation was inaudible ; but he knew one of the parties and his character well, and divined the other rightly. The last words of Algernon Grey too, which, detached from the rest, had seemed to the speaker insignificant, had been uttered in a louder tone, and Herbert had heard him say distinctly,—“In the grey I will not fail you—good-morning, sir.” The expressions were nothing in themselves ; they might refer to any trifling and accidental arrangement ; but Herbert's eyes had been fixed upon the face of Oberntraut, who stood fronting him, and he read the look that it wore, if not with certainty, assuredly not wrongly.

As the two separated the baron doffed his hat and plume to Herbert with every sign of high respect ; and the other returned the salutation, though but coldly. For a moment or two, as Algernon and his companion walked up the hill, nothing was said ; and then the younger gentleman began to speak lightly of indifferent

subjects, thinking that longer silence might lead to suspicions. Herbert answered not, but went on musing, till at length—as if he had paid not the slightest attention to the words which had been falling on his ear for the last two or three minutes—he broke forth at once with a dry laugh, saying: “So, you have contrived to manufacture a quarrel already.”

“Nay, not so!” answered Algernon Grey; “if you mean with the Baron of Oberntraut, let me assure you there is no quarrel of any kind between us. I know of no offence that I have given him, and for my own part I may safely say that I have received none. There was a bet between us which I won, and he seems perhaps a little nettled; but what is that to me?”

Herbert looked down thoughtfully, still walking on, and after a while he paused, asking as abruptly as before,—“Have you many friends in this place?”

“Nay, I have been here but eighteen hours,” answered the other: “happy is the man who can boast of many friends, take the whole world

over and pick them from the four quarters of the globe. I have none who deserves the name within these walls, but the one who came with me."

"Well," replied the other, "should you require one, on occasion of import, you know where to find one who has seen some hard blows given in his day."

"I thank you much, and understand you rightly," said Algernon Grey; "should I have need of such help, depend upon it, I will apply to you and none other. But at present, believe me, I have none."

"What! not '*in the grey?*'" asked Herbert, with a laugh; and then, whistling two or three bars of an English air, he added, "Will you spend an hour or two with an old soldier to-night, my young friend?"

"Willingly," replied Algernon Grey, smiling at the suspicions in which he clearly saw the invitation was given. "When shall I come? My time is quite free."

"Oh! come an hour before twilight," answered

Herbert, and stay till the castle clock strikes ten—Will that suit you?”

“Right well,” said the young Englishman, “I will not fail by a moment, though I see you doubt me. But where am I to find you, and who am I to ask for?”

“I have deceived myself, or you are cheating me,” answered Herbert bluntly, and speaking in English; “but come at all events. You will find me at the castle—ask for Colonel Herbert, or the English Ritter. They will show you where I lodge.”

“Be sure I will be there,” rejoined Algernon; “I did not know you were a countryman; but that will make the evening pass only the more pleasantly, for we shall have thoughts in common, as well as a common language; and, to say sooth, though this German is a fine tongue, yet, while speaking it badly, as I do, I feel like one of the mountebanks we see in fairs dancing a saraband in fetters.”

“You speak it well enough,” answered his companion, “and it is a fine rich tongue; but

at the court, with the usual levity of such light places, they do not value their own wholesome dialect. They must have a dish of French, forsooth; and use a language which they do not half know, and which, if they did, is not half as good a one as their own—a poor pitiful whistling tongue, like the wind blowing through a key hole without the melody of the Italian, the grandeur of the Spanish, the richness of the German, or the strength of the English.”

“Yet it is a good language for conversation,” replied Algernon Grey, willing to follow upon any track that led from the subject of his rencontre with Oberntraut.

“To say things in a double sense, to tickle the ears of light women, and make bad jests upon good subjects,” rejoined Herbert, whose John Bull prejudices seemed somewhat strong; “that is all that it is good for.—Now look here,” he continued, as they reached a commanding point of the hill, “did you ever see a place so badly fortified as this? There is not much to be done with it that is true; for it is commanded

by so many accessible points, that it would cost the price of an empire to make it a fortress. Yet if the Elector would spend upon strengthening his residence against his enemies, one-half of what he is throwing away upon laying out that stupid garden, I would undertake to hold it out for a year and a day against any force that king or emperor could bring against it."

"Something might be done, it is true," answered the young Englishman; "but it could never be made a strong place, domineered as it is by all these mountains. If you fortified them up to the top, it would require an army to garrison them."

"Ay, that is the mistake that will be committed by engineers to the last day, I believe," answered Herbert, who had his peculiar notions on all subjects. "They think they must fortify every commanding point. But there is another and better method of guarding them. Render them inaccessible to artillery, that is all that requires to be done, and then they need no

further defence. On the contrary, they become ramparts that will crumble to no balls. There is no escarpment like the face of a rock. Now this same mad gardener fellow, this Saloman de Caus, who is working away there: he has filled up half a valley, thrown down half a mountain, and the same labour and money, spent in another way, would have rendered every point inaccessible from which a fire could be opened on the castle.—But, look there! Horses are gathering at the gates, and men in gilded jackets. The prince and his fair dame, and all the wild boys and girls of the court are going out upon some progress or expedition—I must hasten down as fast as I can, for I want to speak with one of them before they go.—Remember the hour, and fail not. Can you find your way back?”

“Oh, yes! no fear,” answered Algernon Grey, “I will be with you to-night;” and waving his hand, Herbert hurried down towards the castle.

CHAPTER VI.

“TONY,” cried the page, standing in the gateway of the Golden Stag, and turning half-round towards a sort of covered half-enclosed shed or booth in the court yard, where the English servant, who had accompanied the two travellers on their journey to Heidelberg, was cleaning a pair of his master’s silver stirrups, “here ’s a man inquiring for my lord, and I cannot make out a word that he says.”

“What does he want?” cried Tony from the shed, rubbing away as hard as if his life depended upon making the stirrups look brighter than the groom had been able to render them.

“I can’t tell,” replied the boy; “but he seems to want to give me a hundred crowns.”

“Take them, take them,” rejoined the man, sagaciously, “and ask no questions. I’ll tell you what, Frill, always take gold when you can get it. It comes slow, goes fast, and calls no man master long: a very changeable servant; but a very useful one, while we have him; and there is no fear of his growing old in our service. Don’t let the man know you can speak French, or he might put you to disagreeable interrogatories. Pocket and be silent; it is the way many a man becomes great in this world.”

The advice was given in that sort of bantering tone, which showed evidently that it was not intended to be strictly followed; and the page, taking the crowns, held them up before the eyes of the man who brought them, saying: “For Algernon Grey?”

“Ja, Ja!” said the German servant; “for Algernon Grey;” and, adding a word or two more, which might have been Syriac for aught

the page knew, he withdrew, leaving the money in the boy's hands.

As soon as he was gone, Freville or Frill, as he was familiarly termed by the household, walked back to where his companion was at work, and quietly counted over the money upon the loose board which formed the only table of the shed.

"I must give this to some one to keep, till my lord's return," he said ; "will you take care of it, Tony?"

"Not I," replied the servant ; "I repeat the Lord's Prayer every morning and evening; the first time, to keep me out of temptation by day ; the second, to defend me against it by night—I'll have none of it, Master Frill ; it is a good sum, and too much for any poor man's pocket, especially where the plaket-hole is wide and the bottom somewhat leaky."

"I will take it up to Sir William, then," said the boy ; "for I won't keep it myself. It would be risking my lord's money sadly. Even now my fingers begin to feel somewhat sticky, as if

I had been handling the noses of horse-chestnut buds."

"Get you gone, for a graceless young villain," answered Tony; "what have you to do with the noses of other men's children; you will have enough to do with your own, if I guess right; but, as to the money, methinks it is quite as safe in your pocket, as Sir William's."

"Why, you don't think he would keep it, Tony?" said the page in an inquiring tone.

"As to keeping it," answered Tony, "that's as it may be. He never could keep his own, therefore why should he keep other people's; but between you and I, Frill—" and he dropped his voice as if he did not wish to be overheard—"our young lord is not likely to gain much by Sir William's company. We did very well without him; and though he may not choose to pick my lord's pocket of hard gold, he may take from him what gold will not buy. I have a strange notion, somehow, that it was

not altogether for love he came. If it were, why did not he come long before? But I remember him well, when he was a boy; and he was a cunning devil then; as full of mischief as a pistachio-nut. Why he hung the buttery hatch with a wire like a bird-trap; and the moment old Jonas put his hand out, it fell and nearly chopped off his fingers."

This was a jest just fitted to the meridian of a boy's understanding; and he burst into a fit of laughter at the anecdote.

"Ay, ay," continued Tony, "it would have passed as a wild lad's fun, if we had not known that he had a spite at Jonas, who, one day, when he was thirsty, refused him a cup of hypocras that he wanted, and would only give him a jug of ale.—But who in the name of silks and satins, is this peeping about the court on the tips of his toes, with rosettes and sword-knots enough to swallow him up? It is a page of the court, I do believe. To him, Frill, to him! Speak French to this one, for he looks as if he had been dieted on comfits and spiced wine;

and nothing will go down with him, depend upon it, unless it be garnished with French tongue."

Following the suggestion of his companion, Frill advanced, and the two pages met in the midst of the court-yard, where they stood bowing and complimenting each other, with an extravagance of courtesy which had nearly overpowered good Tony with laughter.

"My heavens! what a pair of monkeys," he exclaimed. "Take away their cloaks, and stick a tail through their satin breeches, and you have got the beast as perfect as at a puppet-show. Look at that little monster Frill, if he has not wriggled himself into an attitude in which he cannot stand while I count four. There, 't is all over; and now he twists to the other side.—What does he want, Frill?" he continued, raising his voice; "talk to him, boy, and don't stand there grinning like a cat-ape."

"He comes down from the castle," answered Frill, turning round, very well satisfied with the graces he had been displaying, "to ask my lord

and Sir William to join the court in a progress to Schönau."

"Tell him Master Algernon Grey is out, and Heaven knows when he will be back again," exclaimed Tony, who was wearied with the courtly air of the pages. "What does the devil's foal say now?" he continued, when Frill had rendered the reply he dictated, and received a speech and a low bow in return.

"He says I must tell Master William Lovet then," replied the page; and conducting the other youth ceremoniously back to the threshold of the gateway, he took leave of him after some farther civil speeches on the one part, and directions on the other.

"There, go and tell Sir William," said Tony, when the boy rejoined him, "and lay the money on the table in our lord's room.—And hark you, Frill, you may as well keep an eye on Sir William's doings; I've doubts, Frill, I have doubts; and I should like to know what he is seeking; for I can't help thinking

there's more under his jerkin than God's will and a good conscience."

"If I thought he meant my lord any harm," answered the boy, boldly, "I'd drive my dagger into him."

"Pooh! nonsense; prick him with a needle or a cobbler's awl," answered Tony, "you'd only let him blood and make him more feverish towards spring time. No, no, my boy, he'll give no cause for offence; but a man may do more harm sometimes with a simple word than a drawn sword—I'll watch him well, however; do you so, too; and if you find out anything, let me know.—Now, away with you, away with you, and tell the good man above; for if he do not make haste, he will not be in time, and then your young bones are likely to suffer."

The page turned to obey, but he had scarcely reached the archway, when William Lovet issued forth, descending from above, and called loudly for his horse.

The page's communication, however, seemed to make an alteration in his purpose; and after

pausing for a moment or two to think, he re-entered the house, ordering everything to be prepared for him to join the train of Frederic and Elizabeth, as soon as he heard them coming down the hill.

William Lovet was a very different man in the solitude of his own chamber and in the company of his cousin. He now waited some twenty minutes, expecting almost every moment to hear the approach of the cavalcade, which was to pass before the windows; but he showed no impatience, no lover-like haste to join the lady at whose suggestion he doubted not the invitation had been given. Sitting at the table, with his hat cast down and his sword taken out of the belt, he leaned his head upon his hand, and seemed buried in meditation. His brow was contracted, and heavy with apparently gloomy thought; and his hand played with the curls of his long dark hair unconsciously. Like many men of strong passions, who set a careful guard upon their tongue when any other human being is near to hear and com-

ment on their words, but feel painfully the restraint then put upon themselves, he was apt, as if for relief, to suffer the secret counsels of his heart to break forth at times, when he felt perfectly certain they would reach no other ear but his own. And this was one of those moments when the workings of strong purposes within him, forced him to give way to the dangerous habit. It was no long continued monologue that he spoke, no loud and vehement outburst of passion; but broken fragments of sentences—as if a portion of his thoughts would clothe themselves in words, and were suddenly checked before they were complete—came forth muttered and disjointed from his lips.

“It must do this time,” he said; and then he fell into thought again, continuing, in about a minute after, “If it do not, means must be found to make it—the time is very short—In another year he goes back—To think of his having wasted full four years amongst all that could tempt a man!—He must be a stone—but he is touched now, or I am mistaken—I must

get this woman to help me—make her a tool when she thinks herself a conqueror! Ha! ha! ha!” and he laughed aloud. “I will never leave it till it is finished.—It may cost a good deal yet; for he is not easily led, that’s clear.—Example, example! That has been always wanting. We will accustom his mind to it—break him like a young colt that first flies from the hand, but soon suffers every child to pat him.—Ay, he is in the high road, if he do not take flight and dart off; but surely, in the wide world of accidents, we shall find something, which, improved by skilful management, will keep him here till that same glittering web of golden threads, called love’s net, is round him—then let the poor stag struggle, and pant, and toss about, he will not easily break through, and the prize is mine.”

His farther thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door. “Come in,” he said; and then exclaimed, in surprise, as the very object of his contemplation stood before him,

“Why, Algernon, you have become mighty ceremonious.”

“Nay,” answered Algernon Grey, laughing, “I thought you were not alone; for I heard one voice speaking, at least; and with a gentleman of your pursuits, one can never tell how inopportune a visit may be.”

“Pshaw!” cried Lovet; “’t is a bad habit I have from my mother. We rash and thoughtless folks, unlike you calm and cautious ones, cannot keep the secrets of our bosom in the safe casket of the heart. We must speak out our thoughts, whatever they may be; and, if we can find no other man to tell them to, we tell them to ourselves.”

“The safest confidant by far,” answered Algernon Grey. “What now, boy?” he continued, turning to the page, who had followed him into the room, and was waiting at hand for an opportunity to speak.

“May it please you, noble sir,” replied the page, “a man, with a badge upon his arm, brought hither a hundred crowns, whence or

why I could not make out, for he had neither French nor English; but he said Algernon Grey well enough; and so I laid them in your chamber."

"I understand," replied his master; "what more?"

"A page from the court, sir," answered the boy; "a very gallant youth, full of fine essences and rich conceits, with satin in abundance, and no lack of ribands ——"

"On my life! he must have been your counterpart, Frill," exclaimed his master, laughing; and, turning to his companion, he added: "This boy has been studying Sydney or Lilly, or some high-flown writer. Well, most delicate Frill, what said your delicate friend?"

"He brought a message, noble sir," replied the page, "inviting Messieurs Algernon Grey and William Lovet to join the cavalcade of the court, going joyously to Schönau. They were to pass by the inn in half an hour."

"And, pray, how did this ingenuous youth deliver himself?" asked Algernon Grey.

“Oh! with marvellous fineness, my lord,” replied the page, “with every courteous invention that his genius could suggest.”

“But the tongue, Master Frill, the tongue?” cried Algernon; “if you could not understand one man, how could you understand the other?”

“He spoke French, my lord, with the utmost perfection,” replied the boy.

“Come, Algernon, you are wasting time,” exclaimed Lovet; “order your horses and your people, or you will be too late.”

Algernon Grey mused for a single instant, and then replied: “I do not go, William.”

“Nay, not go!” exclaimed his friend. “Why, you cannot help yourself, unless you would be called the Great Bear of England. In every country of the world such an invitation from the prince is considered a command.”

“What reply did you make, Frill?” asked the boy’s master.

“I said what Tony told me,” replied the

page, namely, 'Master Algernon Grey is out, and Heaven knows when he will return.'"

"I shall not go, William," repeated the young gentleman, in a thoughtful tone; "I have my own reasons, and assuredly I do not ride to-day."

"Then you are either going to fight a duel, make love, or, in the silent and tender solitude of your chamber in an inn, give yourself up to sweet meditation of your lady's ankles," replied William Lovet, resuming his usual bantering tone. "Methinks, I see you, sitting with the indicator digit of your dexter hand pressed softly on the delicate cheek of youth, the eyebrow raised, one eye to heaven, the other to earth, with a slight poetical squint upon your countenance, and your bosom heaving sighs like a pot of hot broth.—Come, come, Algernon, cast off these humours, or turn anchorite at once. Live like other men, and don't go about the world as if your grandmother's brocade petticoat were hanging for ever over your head, like an extinguisher, putting out the flame of

youth, and health, and strength, and love, and life. Look about you ; see if you can find one single man, of your own age, bearing willingly about upon his shoulders scruples enough to cram a pedlar's pack full of wares, as flimsy and worthless as any it ever contained. Be a man, be a man ! Surely, your boyhood is past ; and you have no longer to fear the pedagogue's rod, if you stray a little beyond the tether of your mother's apron-string."

Algernon Grey smiled calmly, but merely nodded his head, saying : " I shall not go, Lovet, and all the less for a laugh. If I could be turned from my purposes by a jest, I should think myself a boy, indeed. You will find that out at last, good friend. But, hark, there are the trumpets ; get you gone, and good fortune attend you. Call out his horse, Frill, that he may not imitate my sullen boorishness, and keep the princely party waiting."

" Well," cried Lovet, shrugging his shoulders, " most reverend cousin, I will wish you a good morning. In your solemn prayers and devout

outpourings of the heart, remember your poor sinful cousin, and especially petition that he may never see the evil of his ways, nor let one pleasure slip from him that fortune offers to his lip. It is a devout prayer; for if I did not enjoy myself I should do something much worse; and the devil would not only have me in the end, but in the beginning. Adieu, adieu! Here they come; I hear the clatter;" and running to the door he closed it sharply behind him, while Algernon Grey, without approaching too near, turned to the window and gazed out into the market-place.

The next instant a gay and splendid train swept up, preceded by two trumpeters in gorgeous liveries. Magnificent horses, many-coloured apparel, gold and embroidery, graceful forms, and joyous bearing, rendered the party one which any young heart might have been glad to join; but the eye of Algernon Grey ran over the various groups of which it was composed, seemingly seeking some particular object, with a curious and inquiring glance.

It rested principally on the various female figures of the princess's train; but almost all the ladies wore the small black mask, or loup, then common at the court of France, and sometimes, though not so frequently, seen in England. The heat of the day and the power of the sun gave them a fair excuse, in the care of their complexions, for adopting a mode most favourable to intrigue; and, whoever it might be that the young gentleman's eye sought for in the cavalcade, he could not ascertain, with any certainty, which she was.

The etiquette of the court prevented the train from stopping for any of the expected party; but, before it had defiled towards the bridge, the horse of William Lovet dashed forward from the gateway; and, after a low reverence to the Elector, he fell back and attached himself to the side of one of the ladies in the train, who greeted him with a playful nod.

Algernon Grey seated himself at the table, leaned his head thoughtfully upon his hand, and

remained in that position for nearly a quarter of an hour.

“No,” he said, at length, “no, I will not risk her happiness or my own—I will not do it again—it has been once too often.”

He rose as he spoke, and after giving some orders to his servants, strolled down to the river's side, and there, hiring a rude bark, many of which were moored to the bank, he directed the boatman to let it drop slowly down the stream. The hours passed dully, though he was not one of those to whom the silent commune of the heart with itself is wearisome. But there was a cause why that calm meditation, in which he had often found true pleasure, was not now a resource. He tried to cast it off, to fix his mind upon subjects foreign to that upon which his heart was resolved to dwell; and the struggle to escape from an ever recurring object of thought is always heavy labour. Still the hours flew, though with a flagging wing; and when he calculated that the time of his promised visit to Colonel Herbert at the

castle was approaching he returned to the town, and making some change in his apparel, walked slowly up the hill.

The sun was indeed declining, but when he reached the gates of the castle, which stood open, the clock in the bridge tower struck seven, and showed him that he was earlier on the way than he had proposed to be. "Well," he thought, "it matters not. The great and the gay are all absent, and I can stroll about the gardens and courts till the hour comes. Doubtless they will give me admission."

He found no difficulty in gaining entrance, and a servant, of whom he inquired for the lodging of Colonel Herbert, courteously accompanied him across the court-yard, saying he would point it out. Entering the building at the further angle of the court, they passed under the arcade of three stages near the Knights' hall, and then through a long stone passage, to the foot of a flight of steps in the open air, above the highest of which, on a level with his own breast, Algernon Grey saw a wide stone plat-

form, like that of an enormous rampart, surrounded by a balustrade flanked by two small octagon turrets. The tops of the mountains on the other side of the Neckar appeared above the balustrade, the clear blue sky was seen over head, and the evening song of one of the autumn-singing birds made itself heard from the castle gardens, rising clear and melodious over the dull hum which came up from the city below.

“ I am half an hour before my time,” said the young gentleman to the servant, “ and if you will just point out to me which is Colonel Herbert’s lodging, I will wait here till the hour appointed. I may as well pass the minutes in this pleasant place as any where else.”

“ This is the Altan, sir,” replied the man ; “ the view from it is greatly admired ; and if you turn to the right at the end, it will lead you by the only passage there to a door in the first tower—you see it there. The English knight’s lodging is above, and you cannot miss your way. You might, indeed, go round by the

arsenal; but the sentinel will not let you pass, unless I am with you."

"Oh, I shall find it easily, I doubt not," answered the young Englishman; and adding thanks, and a substantial token thereof, he mounted the steps and walked slowly forward to the parapet, while a crowd of the beautiful objects which only nature's treasury can display, rushed upon his eyes in dream-like splendour. Hardly had the first feeling of admiration been felt, however, when a slight exclamation of surprise uttered close to him made him turn his head towards one of the two small octagon turrets which stood at either extreme end of the Altan.

The door was open, and he beheld coming forward a female figure which it required but one look to recognise. There was a well-pleased smile upon her countenance, bland, frank, and simple. She saw her agreeable companion of the night before; she remembered with satisfaction, and without one agitating thought, the pleasant hours she had

spent with him, and advanced gaily and gladly to meet him, only conscious of friendship and esteem.

Algernon Grey was better read in the world than his companion Lovet believed—aye, even in its most difficult page, the heart of woman.

Nevertheless, though he marked the lady's manner, and instantly drew conclusions from it, those conclusions were not altogether just. He saw that straightforward well-pleased look—the free and unembarrassed air, and he said within his heart,—“She at least is in no danger. It is for myself I must beware.” *misinterpreted*

The courtesies of life, however, were not to be omitted; and, though with a grave look, he met his fair companion with the usual salutations of the morning, proposing to himself to speak a few words, and then withdraw. But there are as strong attractions as those of the magnet for the needle; and, once by her side, resolution failed.

“I am very glad to see you,” she said, with the same beaming look; “I had come out-

hither for a solitary walk upon the Altan while the court is absent, and little thought of having a companion who can enjoy this scene as I do."

"How comes it you are not with the gay party?" asked Algernon Grey; "I thought all the world had gone."

"But you and I," answered the lady, "and one whom you have not seen, but whom you should know before you leave this place; for a wiser or a kinder being does not live than the Electress Dowager, Louisa Juliana. No, I stayed to read to and amuse her; for she has been ill lately—what with some anxiety and some sorrow. She would not let me remain longer, or I would gladly have done so; for she has been as a mother to me when I most needed a mother's care—and what can I ever do to repay her?"

"Love her," answered the young Englishman; "that is the repayment from noble heart to noble heart. But this is indeed a splendid view! What a confusion of magnificent objects present themselves at once to the eye, with the

sun setting over yon wide plain and those golden hills beyond."

"Ay," answered Agnes, following with her eyes the direction in which he pointed, "and those golden hills hide in their bosom, as in a rich casket, a thousand jewels. There is not a valley amongst them that is not rich in loveliness, not a hill or craggy steep that does not bear up some castle or abbey, some legend of old times, or some deep history. Can you not mark, too, the current of the glorious Rhine, the King of Europe's streams, as he flows onward there?—No? Beside those towers, you catch a glistening of the waters as they pour forward to revel in the magnificence beyond."

"I see," answered Algernon Grey, "I always love the Rhine, with its vine-covered hills and castled rocks and its storied memories. Its course seems to me like that of some fine old poem, where, in even flow, and amidst images of beauty, the mind is led on with ever varying delight till in the end it falls into calm, solemn, contemplative repose."

“I know little of poetry or poets,” replied Agnes. “Some, indeed, I have read, especially some of the Italian poets, and they are very beautiful, it is true; but I fancy it is better to know the poem than the poet, the work rather than the writer—at least so it has been with all those I have seen.”

“It is true, I believe,” said Algernon Grey, “our thoughts are generally more poetic than our actions, almost always than our demeanour; invariably, I may say, than our persons; and when we remember, that the highest quality of the human mind places before us in a poem only that which mature and deliberate judgment pronounces to be the best of its fruits, it is not wonderful that the man should seem less, when we can see him near, than the poem gave us cause to expect.”

In such conversation as this, of an elaborate and somewhat didactic turn, the young Englishman thought himself perfectly safe. He fancied he could discuss poetry and poems, beautiful scenery, the grand works of nature or of

art, with the loveliest being ever eye beheld, without the slightest danger to himself or others. Unwarned by the fate of Beatrice and her lover, or of Abelard and his pupil, he fancied that on such cold and general themes, he could discourse in safety, even with the fair creature beside him; but he forgot, that through the whole world of the beautiful and the excellent, in nature and in art, there is a grand tie which links with the rest the heart of man: that sympathy is love, in a shallower, or a deeper degree: and he forgot, moreover, that the transition is so easy, by the ever open doors of association, from the most cold and indifferent things to the warmest and the dearest, that the heart must be well guarded, the mind well assured, before it ventures to deal with aught that excites the fancy in companionship with one who has already some hold upon the imagination.

Insensibly, they knew not well how, their conversation deviated from the mere objects tangible to the senses, to the effects produced

by those objects on the mind. From the mind they went to the heart; and Agnes, for a time, went on to talk with glowing eloquence, of all those feelings and emotions, of which it was evident enough to her companion, she spoke by hearsay rather than by experience. Her words were careless, brilliant, even, perhaps, we may say light, in its better sense, for some time after their discourse took that turn. She jested with the subject, she sported with it—like a child who, having found a shining piece of steel, makes a plaything of it, unknowing that it is a dagger which, with a light blow, may cut the knot of life. Suddenly, however, from some feeling, undefined even to herself, she stopped in full career, became thoughtful, serious, more avaricious of her words. A deeper tone pervaded them when they were spoken; and she seemed to have found unexpectedly, that she was dealing with things which at some time might have a more powerful and heartfelt interest for herself, and that she had better escape from such topics,

treating them gravely, whilst she was obliged to treat of them at all. Her conversation, in short, was like a gay pleasure-boat, which quits the shore in sunshine and merriment, but, finding itself far from land, makes its way back with earnest speed with the first cloud that gathers on the sky.

Her altered manner called Algernon Grey to himself; and, as they turned back again along the Altan, he said, anxious to fly from a danger which he felt had its fascination too, but yet mingling with the adieu he was about to speak such a portion of feeling as might pass for ordinary gallantry; "I must now leave you, I believe, for the sun is so low, that it warns me of my engagement to spend this evening with a countryman of ours, named Colonel Herbert, whom I have made acquaintance with this morning—indeed, it is past the hour."

"Oh, I will show you the way," answered Alice, with a smile; "I am going thither, too; but do stay for an instant to look at that star rising over the Odenwald. How clear and calm

it shines ! How round, and full, and unvarying ! It must be a planet ; and I cannot help thinking often, that woman's true sphere is like that of yonder star. There may be brighter things in the heavens, twinkling and sparkling with transcendant light ; but her fate is like that of the planet, to wander round one sole object, from which she receives all her brightness, in constant, tranquil, peaceful watchfulness, calm but not dull, and bright but not alone—now come."

CHAPTER VII.

IN a large circular room, with a massive column in the midst, from which sprang the groins of the numerous arches which formed the vault, sat the stout soldier Herbert, with his two companions, Algernon Grey and the fair Agnes. The chamber itself, notwithstanding its unusual form, was comfortable and highly decorated. The floor, somewhat unusual in those times, and in that country, was of wood; the stone column in the centre was surrounded by a richly-carved oak seat, furnished with cushions of crimson velvet; and the heavy mass of the pillar, which rose above, was broken and relieved by four groups of armour gathered into

the shape of trophies. Seats and bookcases, and those articles of furniture which are now called *etayères*, all likewise of oak, ornamented with velvet and fringes of a crimson colour, occupied the spaces between the windows; and on the one side, midway from the pillar to the wall, was a table covered with clean white linen, supporting various baskets of rich and early fruit, with wine and bread, but no other viands.

On the other side was also a table, on which were cast negligently some books, a pair of gauntlets, two or three daggers from different lands, and a number of objects, valuable either for their rarity or for the beauty of their workmanship. A fine picture stood on the ground, leaning against a chair, at one point; an antique marble vase, richly sculptured, was seen at another; a lance appeared resting on the shoulder of a statue; and the mask of a satyr, from some Roman building, was placed in the gaping vizor of a helmet which stood at the foot of a bookcase. The whole was lighted by

crescets hung against the column, which shed a soft and pleasant lustre through the wide room.

The host and his guests were seated at the table where the fruit was spread, and they seemed to be enjoying highly their simple and innocent meal. Herbert himself was gayer in manner than he had been in the morning; Agnes gave way to the flow of her young bright fancies with as little restraint, or even—less, perhaps, than when she had been with Algeron Grey alone; and the young Englishman feeling that, for that evening at least, it was useless to struggle against the fate that had brought them together, yielded his spirit to the pleasure of the moment, and resolved to enjoy the cup which he had not sought to taste.

It must not indeed be supposed that the conversation was all of a bright or cheerful character; for it went on, in its natural course, from subject to subject, resembling in its aspect a rich autumn day, where glowing sunshine

and sombre masses of cloud alternately sweep over the prospect, giving a varied interest to the scene.

The conversation of Herbert himself was not in general of a very cheerful tone ; it was occasionally pungent, shrewd, and keen in the remarks, but that of a man who, having mingled much with the world—partaken of its pleasures, shared in its strife, and known its sorrows—had withdrawn for several years from any very active participation in the pursuits of other men, still watching eagerly as a spectator the scenes in which he had once been an actor.

The connexion between him and Agnes had somewhat puzzled Algernon Grey at his first entrance. Their evident familiarity, their affection one for the other, had perhaps pained him for an instant—it was but for an instant ; for, though she gave the old soldier both her hands, and kissed with her glowing lips his weather-beaten cheek, it was all done so frankly, so candidly, that the young Englishman felt there

must be something to warrant it—that there was nothing to be concealed. He then asked himself more than once, what the relationship could be? but it was not till he had been there nearly an hour, that the fair girl, in addressing Herbert, called him “My dear uncle.”

Algernon Grey asked himself why he should have felt pained at her familiarity with any man, whether her near relative or not?—but it was a question which he could not or would not answer, and he hurried away from it to other things. “I knew not,” he said, “that this fair lady was your kinswoman, Colonel Herbert, though we spoke of her at good Dr. Alting’s this morning.”

“You gave me no reason to know that it was of her you spoke,” answered Herbert, with a smile.

“Yes, methinks I did,” said the other gaily: “I told you I had been at the court revel last night, and had passed the hours with a lady whom I described right well.”

“Oh, let me hear, dear uncle! let me

hear!" exclaimed Agnes; "I should so much like to hear a stranger's description of myself,—you must tell me all he said."

"That is because you are vain, my child," answered the old soldier; "you would not like to hear it, if you thought he had blamed you:—Nay, I will not tell you a word."

"Then I will divine for myself," cried Agnes; "and you shall see whether I am vain or not. He said he had met a wild romantic girl, not very courtly in her manners, who had talked to him all night on themes which might have suited a painter or a chaplain better than a court lady; that she danced better than she talked,—dressed better than she danced,—and had a sovereign objection to love-speeches."

Algernon Grey smiled, and Herbert replied, tapping her cheek with his fingers, but looking round to their young companion: "You see, sir, in what these women's vanity consists—dancing and dressing! But you are wrong, Agnes, altogether. He said not a word of your dress,—he took no notice of your dancing,—

he did not object to your prattle,—and he told me nothing of his having made you love-speeches.”

“Neither did he,” cried Agnes, with her cheek glowing at the conclusion which her relation had drawn; “we heard many a one passing around us, but he made none. That was the reason I liked his conversation, and I told him so.”

“You tell too readily what is in your heart, my child,” said Herbert; “and yet, good faith, I would not have it otherwise. But of one thing you may be sure, that the man I would ask here was too much a gentleman to say ought of a lady which was not pleasing to my ear. What he said came to this: that you were a good girl, and unlike most others he had met. Was it not so, Master Grey?”

“Somewhat differently expressed and coloured,” answered Algernon Grey; “but, at all events, the substance was no worse;” and, willing to change the theme, he went on to say, “That good Dr. Alting seems a zealous

and enthusiastic man. It is strange that in the commerce with the world of a long life he has not lost more of the fire which generally burns brightly only in youth."

"He has seen little of life," answered Herbert, "knows little of the world, or he would not entertain such high hopes from such doubtful prognostications."

"Then you think his expectations regarding the result of this election will be disappointed?" asked the young Englishman.

Herbert mused gravely, and then replied: "I know not what portion of his expectations you allude to, or whether you mean all. If the latter, I say some of them will certainly be verified: Frederick will be elected, of that I entertain no doubt. These stern Bohemians will never choose a drunkard and a knave, and with that exception there is no other competitor of name. Then, again, that there will be the grand—perhaps the only opportunity that ever will be seen of rendering the pure Protestant faith predominant in Germany,—nay, more,

of breaking the Austrian chain from the neck of the captive empire. I do not at all deny, that the opportunity will be there, but will there be men to seize it? That is what I doubt. Will there be men who, having stretched forth the hand to take the golden occasion, will not, when they have clutched it, suffer it to slip from their grasp? That is the great question; for to fail is worse than not to undertake. The head on which the crown of Bohemia now falls should be one full of those rare energies which lose no chance, and which command success; there should be experience or genius, and, above all, indomitable firmness of character and activity of mind. He should be a man of one grand purpose,—cautious as resolute, watchful as enterprising, leading not led, obstinate in preference to wavering,—with the whole powers of heart and mind bent to the attainment of a single object;—with neither eyes, nor ears, nor thoughts for aught but that. The path is upon a glacier, with a precipice below: one slip is destruction. Now, good as

he is,—brave, intelligent, noble, sincere, devoted,—is the Elector endowed with powers that will bear him up through dangers and difficulties such as the world has seldom seen?”

“Often, where princes themselves would fail,” answered Algernon Grey, “wise counsellors and great generals render them successful.”

“He must be a wise prince, to choose wise counsellors,” said Herbert. “Have we any here?—Besides, if you would calculate the results of the strife about to spring up, look at the materials of the two parties. This is, in truth, a struggle betwixt the Protestants and Papists of Germany. Now, there is something in the very nature of the two religions which gives disunion to the one, consolidation to the other. The Papists are all agreed on every essential point; they are all tutored in the same school, look to the same objects, have in the most important matters the same interests. The least attack upon their religion is a rallying cry for them all; their wills bend to its dic-

tates, their banners unfurl at its call, their swords spring forth in its defence. They are one nation, one tribe, by a stronger tie than common country or common origin. They are one in religion and the religion is one. But what is the case with the Protestants? Split into sects, divided into parties, recognising no authority but their own individual judgments, they hate each other, with a hatred perhaps stronger than that which they feel towards the Romanists; or are cold to each other, which is worse. There is no bond between them but the worst of bonds—a common enmity to another faith. No, no, the whole tendencies of one party are to division, the whole tendencies of the other to union, and union is strength.”

“Nay, my dear uncle,” cried Agnes, “to hear your arguments, one would think you a Papist.”

“Hold your wild tongue, you unreasoning child,” answered Herbert, good-humouredly; “my arguments go to quite a contrary end.

Were there not innate truth unimpeachable in the doctrines of the Protestants, there would not be one sect of them left by this time, so potent are the means arrayed against them, so feeble are the earthly bonds that hold them together. Were it not for the power of truth upon their side, the first blast of wind would blow them from the earth; but great is truth, and it will prevail, however weak be the hands that support it, however strong the arms raised to crush it."

"Yours is a gloomy view, nevertheless," rejoined Algernon Grey; "but we must still trust to the vigour of truth for the support of a just cause. Many will doubtless fall away in the hour of need. Of that I am aware; but if they carry with them only their own weakness and the divisions of the party, their absence will but give strength."

"Well, let us talk of it no more," answered Herbert, "the book of fate has so many pages unopened that who can tell what may be written on the next? That casque which you

see there, crowning the arms on this side of the pillar, was worn by the good and great Coligni. Did he think when he last carried it, that the day of St. Bartholomew, then so nigh, would see his massacre and that of his companions? Did he think that the king, who then leaned upon his shoulder, promising to act by his counsel in all things, would command his assassination? or that the gallant young prince, whom he appreciated in most things so justly, would abandon the faith for which they had both shed their blood, and be murdered by one of the base instruments of the religion he adopted? He must be a madman or inspired who ventures to prophesy even the deeds or events of to-morrow."

"And this, then, was the casque of Coligni?" said Algernon Grey, rising and approaching the pillar; "one of the greatest men, undoubtedly, that ever lived, whose spirit seemed to revel in misfortunes, and whose genius appeared, even to his enemies, but the more bright for defeat."

“Ay, fortune was only constant against him,” answered Herbert, following with Agnes, “he went on with still increasing renown and disaster, till his glory and his reverses were closed by his assassination.”

“The body perished,” said Agnes in a sweet low tone, “and with it all that was perishable. The immortal remained, the fame that calumny could never sully, to this earth; the spirit that triumphed over every reverse, to heaven, from whence it came.”

Herbert laid his hand upon her shoulder, gazing at her with a well-pleased smile. “You may well speak proudly of him, my child,” he said, “for your noble kinsman has left a name which the world cannot match. There are some strange things here,” he continued abruptly, turning to Algernon Grey. “Do you see this ancient cuirass shaped almost like a globe?”

“Ay, and that ghastly hole in the left breast,” cried Agnes, “what a tale that tells! Without a word one reads there that by the

wound then given when the lance pierced through the strong iron, a gallant spirit was sent from earth on the long dark journey. What tears were then shed ! How the bride or the young widow wept in inconsolable grief ! How brethren or parents mourned ! What ties were broken, what long cherished hopes all blasted, what bright schemes and glad purposes then all passed away like a dream !”

Algernon Grey fixed his eyes upon her, while she spoke with a look of sad and solemn earnestness. It was intense and thoughtful, yet full of admiration, and lasted till she ceased ; but Agnes saw it not, for her eyes were raised to her uncle’s face, and her whole spirit was in the words she uttered.

“It is the pleasant part of life, I fear,” he said at length, “which thus passes like a dream. The painful things remain—ay, and grow too. With the bright days pass the bright thoughts ; with the light season flies the light heart. Man has but one summer ; if it

be clouded, let him not look for sunshine. Winter will surely come."

"Ay, on this earth," answered Herbert, "there is another climate hereafter, where winter is not. Still you are in some sense wrong. Each season has its sunny hours for those who seek them. Youth looks forward to age with apprehension, age to the state beyond. Neither know rightly what is in store. All they are sure of is, that there are deprivations coming of things which they fancy treasures; but still each step of life shows that the most prized jewels of the former were but tinsel and false stones. What will the last stage show of all the rest? That cuirass was young Talbot's, slain in the wars in France; that gap let in his death-wound. A noble spirit passed away to a nobler world; a kind young heart mourned, and went to join him. These are brief tales, soon told. Why should we think more of man's life and death than of the opening and the fading of a flower? His immortality itself makes

his life the less worth thought, but as he uses it."

"These gauntlets, too," said Algernon Grey, "they seem less ancient than the cuirass, but yet are not of our own times."

"They are those of a king," answered Herbert; "one whom men esteem great; but like most of the world's great men, with many littlenesses—Francis the First of France."

"All that was great in him," replied Algernon Grey, "belonged to the spirit of a former time. He had a touch of the old chivalrous honour, and compared with others of his day, with our own Harry, and even with his more famous rival, the Emperor Charles, he stands out bright as knight and gentleman, if not as monarch."

"Compare him not with Harry," said Herbert, "that king was a brutal tyrant. He might have been better, indeed, had not men stupidly abolished polygamy, for I dare say he would have been contented to let his wives live, if the laws of society had not made them a

burden to him; and so, like most men, he committed great crimes with a pretext, to escape from smaller faults less easily excused." He spoke laughingly, and then added, "But still he was a base, bloody tyrant, an ungrateful friend, an ungenerous master. No, no, Francis was too good to be likened to him. No, compare him with the man whose sword hangs yonder—with Bayard, and then how small the king becomes, how great the simple gentleman!"

"He was noble, indeed!" exclaimed Agnes; "and it is a consolation, too, to see that men admire him more for his gentler than his sterner qualities. Would that they took his lesson more to heart; for of the great men, as they are called, of this world, how few are there whose renown does not rise on deeds of blood and rapine, how few whose monument is not raised on violations of all justice and equity; the marble their fellow-creatures' corpses, and the mortar ruin, devastation, wrong, watered with blood and tears."

Algernon Grey gazed upon her again with the same sad and thoughtful look; and Herbert replied, "Too true, my child; but yet"—and he smiled somewhat sarcastically—"I have rarely known the lady who did not love these sanguinary gentlemen more than the humble man of peace. It is you, and such as you, who spur us on to war."

"War must be, I fear," answered Agnes; "and Heaven forbid that any gentleman should be a coward, trembling for so light a thing as life; but if, when driven unwillingly to strife, men would, like that great hero you have mentioned, soften the rugged trade by the virtues of the Christian and the knight, protect, defend, support, rather than oppress, injure, and trample down, the warrior would be worthy of all love, and great men would become great indeed. As it is, one turns with horror from the blood-stained page of history, where grasping ambition rides in the tinsel chariot of a false renown, over the craunching bones of whole generations slain. 'The world's

greatness is not for me ; and, all woman as I am, dear uncle, I would rather be a nun, mewed in a cloister, than the wife of one of these great men."

She spoke with a fire and energy which Algernon Grey had never seen in her before ; but some of her words seemed to affect Herbert more than might have been expected. He walked suddenly back to the table, and seated himself, leaning his head upon his hand, with a sad and gloomy look. Agnes paused a moment, and then drew gently near, laid her hand upon his, kissed his furrowed brow, and murmured, "Forgive me ! I did not mean to pain you ; I thought not of what I said."

"It is nothing, it is nothing," answered Herbert ; "it will pass, dear child ;" and almost as he spoke, a servant, dressed in a different livery from that of the court, entered, saying : "The Dowager Electress, madam, has sent to tell you she is ready when you like to come."

"I will be with her directly," answered the

fair girl; and turning to Herbert again, she added in a sad tone: "I have given pain enough here, for one night at least.—Farewell, countryman," she continued frankly, holding out her soft white hand to Algernon Grey, "I do not know whether we shall ever meet again; but, methinks, you will remember this night, so unlike any you have probably ever passed."

Her words were free and unembarrassed; but Algernon Grey had deeper feelings in his heart, and he merely replied, "I will," at the same time, however, he bent his head and pressed his lips upon the hand she gave him. It was a common act of courtesy in those days, marking nothing but a feeling of friendship or respect; and Agnes, receiving it as such, drew the light veil, which had fallen upon her shoulders, over her head, and left the room.

For a single instant Herbert remained seated in the same desponding attitude. Then rousing himself, he turned to his guest, saying: "Come, taste the wine again. It is but sour stuff this

Rhenish wine at the best, but this is as good as any."

"It is better than any that I have ever tasted here," answered Algernon; "and I do not dislike these wines. One does not feel as if one were drinking molten fire, as with the heady grape of Burgundy, after which the blood seems to go tingling in fever to the fingers' ends. One more glass, then, to the health of the fair lady who has left us."

"Yes, she is fair," answered Herbert, thoughtfully, after drinking his wine,—“Beautiful as her mother, and as good—more gay, but not less thoughtful.—Now, my young friend,” he continued, “there is one thing puzzles me in you. That you should think the child lovely does not surprise me, for she is so: I know it, and am accustomed to hear others say so; but she sets so little store by her beauty, that it gives me no pain. There is a difference between admiration and love. It is evident enough that the blind god has nought to do in the case between you and her; but yet you

have more than once gazed at her long, and with a sad and serious countenance, as if there were deep thoughts regarding her silently busy at your heart. If you mind not telling them, I would fain hear what those thoughts were."

"I caught myself so gazing," said Algernon, with a smile, "not long before she left the room. It was when she spoke of the horrors and evils of war; and that theme connected itself in my mind with what had passed before. I asked myself, if these bright scenes are destined to be visited by strife and pillage and desolation, what will be the fate of that young fair being, and many others like her. Hardships and rude alarms and the daily peril of life is what men are habituated to from boyhood; but what can woman do at such a season? She can but sit still and weep, awaiting her destiny, whatever it may be. The clang of the trumpet, or the roll of the drum, gives her no inspiring occupation to while away the hours of suspense; and, the rude captor's prey in a town taken by assault, death, and worse

than death, may be her portion.—Such were the thoughts which moved me on this last occasion. If I stared at her so rudely at any other time, I have forgotten the cause.”

“It will be long, I trust,” answered Herbert, “very long, before the storm rolls hither, even at the worst; and till it comes, here she is safe enough. But yet, methinks, good friend, your thoughts take a gloomy turn, and somewhat strange for the youth of the present day. With nine men out of ten in every court of Europe—France, England, Germany—we should have nought but gallant speeches, courtly discourses of small hands and beautiful feet, and eyebrows marvellously turned, or lectures upon bravery, what colours suit with what complexions, what ribands and what laces best harmonize, what dress becomes the gay and young, the tall, the short—with an intermixture of sighs and smiles, and some slight touch of roses and other flowers, to give an Arcadian glow to the whole. But here you have been as grave as a judge over a long cause which makes

his dinner wait; speaking with all calm solemnity, as if you had never been taught to laugh. —Why so sad, my friend? Time enough for sadness, when real sorrow comes.”

Algernon Grey's brow became graver than before; not that he looked hurt, or pained, but there was a sort of stern and serious earnestness upon his face, as he replied with brief, slow, pointed words: “Most men have some sad secret in their bosom.”

“So young!” said Herbert, musing. “Nay, I think not most men; though some few may.”

“Have not you, yourself?” asked Algernon Grey, fixing his eyes upon him steadfastly, “and none can say what will be the hour for the poisoning of all life's streams;” and he paused and fell into thought.

“I knew not that the lady was your niece,” he continued after a time; “nor certainly did I expect to meet her here. I seek not dangerous companionships; and, methinks, her society might well be so to any one whose heart is not a stone. However, she is too free

and happy, too tranquil in her thoughts and her soul, to be easily won ; and I do trust, when she is won, that she may meet a person well worthy of her."

" Oh, she will do well enough," answered Herbert. " Women always choose ill ; but, perhaps, she may not choose at all ; and I believe the gross amount of happiness would be on that side, from all I know of men.—We are strange beings, Master Grey—boys unto the last, we covet eagerly each glittering toy we see ; and then misuse it, when we have it safe."

These last words gave a different turn to the conversation ; and it wandered wide, and lasted long. Before it came to an end, the trumpets of the Elector's party were heard in the courtyard ; and Herbert smiled somewhat cynically, but made no observation. Shortly after, the castle clock struck ten ; and Algernon Grey took his leave and returned towards his inn on foot, pondering upon the character of the man he had just left, and striving, as we all do when we meet with one unlike the generality of our

acquaintance, to plunge beneath the surface and discover the hidden things of mind and heart. These reveries were not so profound, however, as to prevent him from remarking that thick clouds were driving over the sky, while the stars shone out and disappeared at intervals, as the grey vapoury veil was cast over them, or withdrawn. The wind, too, had risen high; and the night was very different from that which had preceded. When he, at length, reached the inn, some drops of rain were falling; and his heart felt sadder, certainly, rather than lighter, from the visit he had paid.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a night of storms and tempests. As is not unusual in hilly districts, thunder, as well as rain, was brought up by the gusty wind. The house, though in the midst of the town, seemed to rock with the violence of the blast. The pannelling cracked; the arras waved over the door; the rain poured down in incessant torrents; and when Algernon Grey looked forth from his window, as he did more than once during the long night, he beheld the livid lightning flaming along the streets, reflected as by a mirror from the wet and shining pavement of the causeway. Quick upon the flash came the pealing thunder, as if one of the granite

mountains had been riven by the bolt of heaven, and rolled in crashing fragments into the valley below.

It was late ere he retired to rest ; and for more than one hour he continued pacing up and down his chamber in deep thought, reproaching himself for weakness in having given himself up to fascinations, which he now found might soon become too strong for all his resolution to resist. It is a painful moment when a firm and determined mind first discovers in itself that weakness which is in all human nature, when it has to accuse itself of having yielded, even in a degree, to temptations which it had resolved to oppose ; when it learns to doubt its own stability and vigour, and is forced, from experience of the past, to attach a condition, dependent upon its own strength or feebleness, to every resolution for the future. It is a painful moment, a moment of apprehension and dread, of doubt and sorrow ; and Algernon Grey, more than once, said to himself, “ No, I will not go thither again—whether

William stays here or not, I will go forward."

He was weary, however, and when he did retire to rest, sleep soon visited his eyelids; but the form which had troubled his waking thoughts, visited him with more calming and pleasing influence in his dreams. Agnes wandered with him, Heaven knows where; no longer bringing with her hesitation and doubt as to his own course; but smiling with all her youthful grace unclouded, and spreading sunshine around her, even to the very depths of his own heart. As so rarely happens, he remembered his dream, too, when he awoke; and it seemed as if imagination was but an agent of Fate, to bind him in those bonds against which he struggled fruitlessly.

It was late ere he unclosed his eyes. The sun was far up in the sky, but still not showing his face unto the earth; for the storm had sunk away into dull heavy rain; and the pattering torrents, which fell from the gutters into the streets, told how heavy was the descending

deluge. Large undefined wreaths of white vapour were wound round the brows of the hills; and the eye could not penetrate either up or down the valley beyond a few hundred yards from the spot where the observer stood.

William Lovet was in an ill humour; for he had engaged himself to ride again with the court that morning, if the day were fine. But still his spleen took a merry form; and though his jests were somewhat more bitter than usual, he jested still. Often did he look at the sky, and still the same grave blank presented itself till the hour of noon. Then the expanse grew mottled with slight feathery flakes; the flakes separated themselves wider and wider from each other, drew into distinct masses and left the blue sky visible here and there. The sun shone out over the valley and the plain; but the clouds upon the higher hills looked only the more black and menacing. However, about half-past twelve o'clock, a page came down to the inn with a billet for Master William Lovet, sealed, perfumed, and tied with

floss silk of a rose colour, after the most approved mode of tender epistles of a period somewhat antecedent. William Lovet took it eagerly; but yet he could not make up his mind to open it without some slight touches of his own sarcastic humour. He hung the silk upon his little finger, held the note up to Algernon Grey with a gay smile, and then carried it to his nose and to his lips, exclaiming: “Perfumed with sighs, and flavoured with kisses! Verily, verily, Algernon, you are like an anchorite at a feast, with delicate dishes and fine wines before you, and yet you will not taste—But I must read the dear contents. Witness all ye gods, that I have sworn no constancy. Of all the silly nations in the world, the Lotophagi were the most foolish; for after having once tasted their favourite food, they could relish no other. Now my unperturbed palate can feast on every sweet thing that is offered it.”

While he had been uttering the last words, he had cut the silk and opened the letter; and,

having read it through, he turned to his friend, saying, "The expedition is put off till after dinner; but at two we set forth. Do you come, Algernon?"

"Not I," answered Algernon Grey; "I have no invitation."

"That will be soon procured," replied Lovet; "but faith, I will not press you. For the future, you shall follow your own course; for I see it is all in vain to hope for anything like the fire of youth in you. I did think, indeed, when I saw you and that lovely Agnes Herbert together, some spark might be elicited; especially when my fair friend told me that she is as cold as you are: for you see, Algernon—and he laid his finger on his breast, with a laughing look—"by striking flint and steel, two hard, cold things together, men make a fire—but now I give you up. Continue to live on in sanctified decorum, and bring back a virgin heart to England with you. Were you in witty Venice, the ladies of the place would present you with a coral and bells."

“ And I would give them in return a veil and a pair of gloves,” answered Algernon Grey.

“ Oh, they wear masks,” cried Lovet.

“ I know they do,” said his companion, “ and I am not fond of masks.”

“ Well, well, I must have dinner quick, and ride up to the castle,” was the reply. “ Every one to his own course, and happiness of his own kind to each.”

The dinner was obtained. William Lovet equipped himself in his bravery; and Algernon Grey remained at the inn, pondering over the rencontre that was before him. To few men, even of the most gallant and determined, are the hours preceding a meeting of this kind the most pleasant in life. And, though perhaps no man ever lived who had a smaller sense of personal danger than Algernon Grey, yet they were peculiarly painful and disagreeable to him. Bred, like almost every man of noble family at that time, to arms, he had been in his boyhood inured to peril and accustomed to look death in the face; but still, educated with very

strict notions in regard to religion, he could not free his mind from a belief, that to slay a fellow-creature in such an encounter was a crime. The habits of the day, the general custom of society, had their effect upon him, as upon all others; but still a conscientious repugnance lingered in his mind and produced that gloom which no feeling of apprehension could create. There was no alleviating circumstance either—there was nothing to excite or to carry him forward. He had no personal quarrel with his adversary; he had neither animosity nor anger to stimulate him; and, as I have said, the intervening hours were very dull and painful. He wrote some letters and memoranda, however; more to occupy the time than for any other reason. He ordered his horse to be ready, and the page to accompany him. He examined his sword-blade, and tried it on the ground; and at length, when the sun was approaching the horizon on its decline, he mounted and rode slowly out, with a calm, grave air, telling his servants to have supper prepared against his

return. Not the slightest suspicion was entertained of his purpose; and the page rode gaily after, looking round at every thing they passed, and wondering whither his master was bound.

When they had approached the river, however, it presented a very different scene from that which had been seen from its banks for several weeks before. The green Neckar, so clear and glassy, was now a turbid torrent, red, swollen, and impetuous. The waters had risen in the course of the day and night several feet, and were dashing against the piers of the bridge and the walls of the curious old castelated houses, which then bordered the river, in impotent fury. Many of the rocks, which in ordinary weather raise their heads high above the stream, were now either entirely covered, or washed over from time to time by the waves, which a strong south-west wind occasioned in its struggle with the angry current of the stream. As the horse of Algernon Grey set its foot upon the bridge, a heavy rumbling

sound from the east and north, low but distinct, and pealing long among the hills, told that the dark clouds, which were still seen hanging there, were pouring forth their mingled lightning and rain into the valleys of the Odenwald. But the moment that Algernon Grey had passed the slope of the bridge, he saw before him that which engrossed his whole attention. The Baron of Oberntraut was waiting for him under the archway of the opposite bridge-house, although the time appointed had hardly arrived; and, quickening his pace, the young Englishman rode on and joined him. Their salutations were perfectly courteous; and Oberntraut remarked, in a calm indifferent tone, "We are both a little before our time, I think; but the river is still rising, and this road by the bank has sometimes enough water on it to wet our horses' pasterns. With your good leave, I will show you the way. The stream has not yet come up, I see."

Thus saying, he turned to the right at the foot of the bridge, ascending the river; but

it may be necessary to say that, at the time I speak of, the right bank of the Neckar presented a very different aspect from that which it now displays. No houses were to be seen between Neunheim on the one hand, and the old religious foundation of Neuburg, now called the Stift, on the other. The road was not elevated as it is now; but ran low, within a few feet of the ordinary level of the stream. The woods upon the Heiligberg, or Holy Mountain, and the other hills towards Neckarsteinach came sweeping down to within a few feet of the road; and, here and there, a path, large or small, according to the necessities of the case, led away up to the north, wherever a village was situated in any of the dells, or a small piece of level ground, terraced upon the face of the mountain, had afforded the peasants an opportunity of planting the apple or plum tree. The vine was not seen, unless it were a small patch in the neighbourhood of Neunheim, or of the Stift Neuburg.

Along the low horse-road, which served as a towing-path for the boats, the Baron of Oberntraut led the young English gentleman, at a slow and quiet pace, till they were within about a third of a mile of the latter place. There the hills receded a little, leaving some more level ground, still apparently thickly wooded; and, at a spot, where stood a boatman's hut, with two or three rude barks, moored to the shore, the entrance of a by-way was seen, which narrowed within view, till the space was not larger than would admit the passage of a single horse. At the entrance of this path the Baron drew in his rein, saying to his companion: "We will leave the horses and pages here, if you please, and proceed for a couple of hundred yards on foot."

Algernon Grey consented, of course; and orders were given to the two youths to lead the horses after their masters, as far as they could up the path—which, indeed, could not be done for more than three or four yards—and then to wait there.

“If you will excuse me,” continued Oberntraut, “I will precede you.”

Algernon Grey merely bowed his head, without reply, till the other had gone on forty or fifty yards, when he said: “The sun is going rapidly down, if not gone already behind the hills; and I think if we do not hurry our pace, we shall not have light.”

“Oh, it is the wood makes it so dark here,” answered his companion, in a gay and somewhat self-sufficient tone; “we shall have more light in an instant; and the twilight lasts long here.”

Thus saying he walked forward; and in less than two minutes led the way out upon a small green meadow, of not more than a quarter of an acre in extent, the second crop of grass from which had been lately carried away, leaving the turf smooth and short.

“This place seems made for the purpose,” said Algernon Grey, drily.

“It is often used for such,” answered Obern-

traut, advancing into the midst, and throwing off his cloak.

Algernon Grey followed his example, drew his sword, and laid the belt and sheath with the cloak.

“Our weapons are of the usual length, I suppose,” said Oberntraut, speaking through his teeth; for there was more bitterness in his heart than he wished to appear.

“I really do not know,” answered Algernon Grey; “but you had better measure them;” and he laid his by the side of his adversary’s. There was a considerable difference, however; the English blade was not so long as the German by at least two inches; and when the Baron observed it, his cheek flushed and his brow contracted; but his heart was noble and just, though somewhat impetuous and fierce; and, after a moment’s pause, he said: “I cannot fight you with this disparity; we must put it off till another day. It is my fault, too; I should have sent you the measure of my weapon, or asked the length of yours.”

“It matters not,” answered the young Englishman; “your sword is a little longer than mine; but my arm is somewhat longer than yours; thus the difference is made up; and nothing of this kind should ever be put off for slight punctilios. Besides, my stay in this country must be short; and I may not have another opportunity of gratifying you. With thanks, then, for your courtesy, I say we must go forward as the matter is.”

“Well, well,” answered Oberntraut; “if such is your opinion, I am ready.”

“We had better move the cloaks out of the way,” answered Algernon Grey; “I see the light will not fail us.”

“Oh, no fear of that,” said the Baron; “these things do not take long.”

The young Englishman smiled; and, the field having been cleared, advanced, with ceremonious courtesy, and saluted his adversary. Oberntraut returned the compliment; and their swords then crossed.

The great school for the use of that weapon

with which both gentlemen were now armed, was, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the low, fallen land of Italy, where Algernon Grey had passed several years. In point of strength, the two adversaries were very equally matched; for, though the young Englishman was somewhat taller and more supple, yet Oberntraut was several years older, and had acquired that firmness and vigour of muscle, which is obtained long enough before any portion of activity is lost. The latter was also very skilful in the use of his arms; but here Algernon Grey, from the schools in which he had studied, was undoubtedly superior. He was also superior in perfect coolness. There was no angry passion in his breast, no haste, no impetuosity. He came there to defend himself, to oppose an adversary, but neither eager nor fearful. He felt as if he were in a hall of arms with baited weapons, merely trying his skill. He was anxious to disarm his opponent, not to hurt him; and in the first three passes Oberntraut was taught that

he was pitted against a complete master of the rapier. At first this discovery served to make him more cautious; and he used all his skill; but it was all in vain. He could not approach his adversary's breast; wherever his point turned, the blade of Algernon Grey met it; and more than once the Baron felt that he had laid himself open to the riposte, but that, from some cause, his adversary had not seized the opportunity. Repeated disappointments, however, rendered him irritable and incautious. He watched, indeed, his opponent's defence, thinking to learn what he called the trick, and overcome it by another sort of attack; but, whenever he changed his mode, Algernon met it with a different parry; and the clashing sword passed innocuous by his shoulder or his hip.

The light began to wane perceptibly, and as cool and perhaps cooler than when he began, the young Englishman recollected his adversary's words, and thought, "These things take longer than you imagined, my good friend, with a man who knows what he is about."

A slight smile curled his lip, at the same time ; and thinking that he was mocking him, Oberntraut renewed the attack with tenfold fury. Algernon Grey gave a momentary glance to the sky ; the rose had died away from above ; heavy clouds were driving over in detached masses ; a drop of rain fell upon his hand ; and he saw that, in two or three minutes, the air would become quite dark.

“I must wound him,” said he to himself, “or in this dull twilight I shall get hurt ; he is too keen to be disarmed ; I must wound him, but slightly.”

At the same moment Oberntraut made a furious pass ; the young Englishman parried the lunge, but, though his adversary’s breast was left unguarded, his heart smote him, and he would not return it, lest he should touch some vital part. The Baron pressed him close with pass after pass ; and step by step the young Englishman retreated. Then suddenly changing his mode, Algernon assumed the attack, drove his adversary before him in good guard,

and then, in the Italian manner, took a bound back and stood in defence. Oberntraut, following the method, of which he had some knowledge, sprang forward and lunged. Algernon parried and returned; but at the same moment the Baron's foot slipped on the wet grass, the sword's point caught him on the right breast close to the collar-bone, and passed out behind the shoulder. He staggered up, raised his weapon, let it fall, and sank slowly on the ground.

However cool and self-possessed a man may be—though he may think himself fully justified in what he has done, though he may have been acting in self-defence, though the act may have been inevitable—yet no one can inflict a real and serious injury upon another without feeling a certain degree of regret, if not remorse, unless his heart be as hard as adamant. It is at such moments that the strange link of consanguinity which binds the whole human race together is first known to us; it is then that we feel we are brothers, and that

we have raised a hand against a brother's life.

The moment that the deed was done—and it was evidently more than he had intended to do—Algernon Grey felt a pang shoot through his heart, and he said internally: “Would that he had not driven me to it, would that he had not provoked it!” but, casting down his sword at once, he knelt by Oberntraut's side, and, raising his head and shoulders on his knee, exclaimed in kindly and eager tones: “I hope you are not much hurt!”

“A little faint,” said Oberntraut, slowly; “not much—I shall be better presently, and able to go on.”

“Nonsense, nonsense!” exclaimed Algernon Grey, vehemently, “to go on in combat against a man with whom you have no quarrel, who has never injured, insulted, or offended you, who was friendly disposed towards you? My good friend, I will draw the sword against you no more; I have had enough of it.”

“Methinks, so have I,” said Oberntraut, faintly, with a light smile passing over his face. “You are a master of the science;—that pass was splendid.”

“It was the turf!” cried Algernon Grey; “had you not slipped, I should have hardly touched you.”

Oberntraut pressed his hand, saying, “If you could stop the bleeding—it is soaking through all my doublet;—you had better call the page.”

“I will try to staunch the blood first,” answered Algernon Grey; “no time is to be lost—five minutes more and we shall not see the wound;” and, opening the vest and shirt of his opponent, which were now both drenched in blood, he tore his handkerchief in two, making each half into a sort of compress, as he had often before seen the surgeons do, when hurried on the field of battle. He fixed one on the wound before, the other on the aperture behind the shoulder, and with the Baron’s scarf and his own, bound them tightly down, stopping

the flow of blood, at least in a degree. Then, after gazing at him for a moment or two, he said, "I will leave you only during an instant, and send the page for a litter or something to bear you to the town."

"No, no," answered his former adversary; "send up to the Stift Neuburg, they will take me in and tend me well. Then a surgeon can be brought;—but remember, whatever happens, this is not your fault; it was my own seeking—my own doing,—no one is to be blamed but myself. Methinks the bleeding has stopped."

Algernon Grey hurried away, found the path without difficulty, and ran down towards the road; but the moment his own page saw him coming, he threw the reins of the horses to the other and sprang to meet his master, exclaiming, "Away, my lord, away, or you will not be able to pass. The river is rising rapidly; the water is already upon the road."

"Mind not me," exclaimed Algernon Grey, "but hasten with all speed up to the building there

upon the left. Fly, boy, fly! and give notice that there is a gentleman lying wounded in the wood. Beg the people to send down bearers instantly to carry him up thither."

The boy gazed at him with a look of surprise and consternation, and seemed about to ask some question, when Algernon Grey exclaimed, "Away! inquire nothing; his life depends upon your speed."

The page instantly darted off to execute the commission, when suddenly a sound was heard as of the feet of many horses coming at a rapid pace round the wood and the rocks beyond. The boy paused and drew back for an instant; and a part of the splendid train of the Elector and his Princess swept along, with their horses' hoofs splashing in the water, which was now two or three inches deep on that part of the road. The boy then ran on, and Algernon Grey advanced a step or two to catch some stragglers of the party and bid them send a surgeon quickly from the town; but, ere he reached the broad road, two

or three cavaliers dashed past like lightning, without noticing him; and the next instant a shrill piercing shriek broke upon his ear.

CHAPTER IX.

THE court of the Elector, Frederic the Fifth, was, as I have in some degree shown, one of the gayest as well as one of the most splendid in Europe. Nay, the merriment and revelry that reigned therein, puzzled the stern Calvinistic ministers not a little, how to excuse a degree of levity in the Prince and Princess, which they undoubtedly thought most unbecoming in the heads of the severe Puritanical party in Germany. They would have censured and interfered, beyond all doubt, if they had dared; but the ministers of a sect whose religious teachers have little real power beyond that which the fanaticism of their disciples affords, are rather apt to grow sycophantish in the case

of great personages, whose countenance and protection are necessary to the support of their authority, if not to their existence. It thus happened, that Scultetus and his brethren, as the good man's own writings show, were exceedingly lenient to the amiable lightness of the Elector, and contented themselves with very severe and menacing sermons before the court, while they seized every opportunity of apologizing for the gaiety of the prince and his consort, on the score of youth, prosperity, and habit.

Thus day after day, some new party of pleasure, some sport, some revel—interrupted only by occasional wild bursts of fanaticism, which had their interest and excitement also—kept up the thoughtless spirits of the court of the Palatinate, and sometimes afforded opportunity for pursuits not quite so innocent.

On the evening of which we have just been speaking, a large party, though somewhat less in number than that of the preceding day, issued forth from the gates of the castle, crossed the

bridge and took its way along the same road which was afterwards pursued by Algernon Grey and the Baron of Oberntraut. I will not pause to describe the amusements of the afternoon, nor to tell how the cavalcade was led through paths and by-ways which had seldom seen ought so gay before. Schönau, which they had visited on the preceding day, was merely passed through, to the renewed admiration of the good peasants; and then by a narrow road, which naturally separated the party into pairs, the glittering troop reached a little village with a curious contradictory name, called Alt Neudorf, or Old New Town. The look of the village seemed somewhat desolate to the eyes even of the fair Electress, who was naturally inclined to any wild expedition; but the whole party were soon agreeably surprised to find a house and garden in the midst of the place, decked out with flags and banners and pieces of tapestry, as if for their reception, while well known servants of the court appeared at the doors, in quaint dresses, to receive the princely personages, and

a rich collation of cold meats, fine wines and fruits, was spread in a large room hung like a royal tent and carpeted with dry moss.

During the ride thither, William Lovet had maintained his place by the side of the fair Countess of Laussitz; but he seemed in a less cheerful and amiable humour than the day before; and directing her eyes by his own towards the person of a lady who rode near, he said, as they approached the village:—

“You told me she would not be here.”

“Why what difference does her presence or absence make to you, servant?” asked the countess; “do you hate her so that you cannot bear her sight? You are as dull and sullen as if you had been crossed in love by her.”

Lovet saw that he had shown his ill-humour too far, and replied, with a more smiling air, “I thought women were better politicians, Beauty. Can you not divine why I am vexed? It is not that I am displeased to have her here, but not to have her somewhere else. On my good cousin’s stay in this country depends my

own by your fair side ; for I have sworn to keep him company for a year. If he goes I must go, and how could I live without you for twelve months ?”

“ But what has that to do with Agnes Herbert ?” asked the lady.

“ What ! were those bright eyes only made to pierce my heart and not to see ?” cried Lovet. “ Have you not perceived that love caught him by the hand that very first night ; and now he is struggling to free himself. Had she remained behind, he would have seen her, as he did last night ; and another link would have been added to the chain which keeps him here, and me at your small feet. You must help me, bright one, to rivet this young girl’s chain around his neck. I, too, must find a moment during our ride to-day to prompt her, even at the loss of some part of my sunshine.”

In the train of the Elector there were more persons than William Lovet not altogether contented with the events of the day. Critical moments were approaching, when decision was necessary, and when each decision, even upon

a small and apparently trifling point, might influence the destinies not only of the Palatinate, but of the whole of Germany; and, more remotely, of the whole world. There were some men at the court of the Elector who took this wider and more comprehensive view, and were anxious to see all his acts well weighed, and his whole thoughts directed to the consideration of questions so great in magnitude. At the same time there were others of a narrower scope, who were anxious to fix his opinions in favour of that party to which they belonged, or of that particular course which their party advocated. The levity and revelry of the court, of course, interfered with the purposes of each; and, on the present occasion, two or three of the young sovereign's counsellors, frustrated in former efforts to obtain his ear, had followed the cavalcade in the hope that some opportunity would occur of enforcing each his separate opinion. The two most influential persons present, as politicians, were the celebrated Louis Camerarius and the Viscount Achates de Dohna, lately the Electoral Am-

bassador at Prague.* Very different, indeed, were the two men, and very different their views; but, without attempting to paint the characters of each, it may only be necessary to say that, upon this occasion, Camerarius sought eagerly to keep the ear of the Elector entirely to himself, filling it with flattering prospects of greatness to come; while Dohna only endeavoured, from time to time, to place before the eyes of his master, by a few brief words, the dangers and difficulties of an undertaking, to which his more flattering or more interested courtiers were hurrying him too eagerly forward.

It was not till the collation was over, nor even till the party had passed through the small village of Ziegelhausen, that either the one or the other found any opportunity of advancing his particular notions. Then, however, on the narrow way, which varied in width at different places, the Elector rode a few steps in advance, calling Camerarius to his side; while the Princess Elizabeth, with

* By some historians he is called Baron de Dohna.

some ladies and gentlemen, followed, having Dohna on her left hand, between her and the river. The pace at which they proceeded was at first slow; and the wind, as I have said, blew strong up the turbulent stream. Thus, when the prince and his counsellor raised their voices, the sound was distinctly carried to the party behind. Once or twice, just as they quitted Ziegelhausen, the horse of Dohna was seen to prance and curvet, as if either it or its rider had become suddenly impatient; and at length the voice of Camerarius was heard by the whole group round the Princess, saying, "They cannot pretend that your Highness had any hand in it. The whole affair is of Bohemian manufacture."

Dohna struck his horse sharply with the spur, was in an instant by the prince's side, and answered aloud, "So is the gold chain round your neck, Counsellor Camerarius."

Then, reining in his horse, he fell back to the side of the Electress, leaving Camerarius a little confused. The latter was too old a courtier, however, to suffer his anger and

shame to be apparent; and merely saying, "The viscount seems angry this evening," he went on with his flowery discourse.

"Should such a choice be made," he said, it can but be looked upon as the call of Heaven. That a mixed population of different creeds and sentiments should unite in placing on their throne a prince, not only strong by his own power and his high qualities, but who is also the head and main stay of the great Protestant Union of Germany, must be the result of some supreme directing power, superior to the mere wisdom of man."

Dohna was at the prince's side again in an instant. "How long will the Union last united?" he said; "has it ever been united? Has it ever acted in harmony? Throw that out of the calculation, except as an element of discord."

Camerarius gave him a furious look, the Elector was silent, and Dohna let them again pass on, resuming his conversation with the Electress.

The next words that were heard were from the mouth of Frederic; though several sentences had been spoken in the mean while, which did not reach the ears of those behind.

“They are, indeed, a determined race,” he said; “ready to shed their best blood, rather than submit to the tyranny of the Roman church.”

“They have shown themselves, for ages, your Highness,” answered Camerarius, “resolute and vigorous in support of any cause they undertake.”

Dohna spurred forward again: “I know them better than any one,” he exclaimed, “and I will not conceal that, though they are headstrong and obstinate, fierce and passionate, they are ready to abandon any leader on the first grievance, and refuse him all vigorous support, unless he square his conscience to their prejudices.”

This time he did not seem disposed to withdraw; for the road was wider; and Camerarius, trusting he had produced some

effect, was unwilling to pursue the subject farther, in the presence of such an opponent. They were now passing the Stift Neuburg, and, casting his eyes forward, he exclaimed, "We had better hurry our pace, my lord; the water there seems rising rapidly over the road."

"Quick, quick!" cried Frederic, shouting to those behind; "spur on, or we shall be cut off by the river."

A couple of hundred yards farther, the road was found covered with the water; and the Elector suddenly drew in his horse with an air of hesitation.

"Is that the spirit to win, or keep a crown?" murmured Dohna to himself; and, striking his spurs into his horse's side, he exclaimed aloud, "This way, your Highness, this way! I will show you the path. The water is not two inches deep;" and, riding hastily on, he soon reached a spot where the causeway rose again above the level to which the river had risen. Those who were immediately behind, followed at once; and, though the whole of the electoral

party had separated into distinct groups, another and another passed without fear or danger.

We must turn, however, here, to the last personages of the cavalcade, and follow them from Ziegelhausen.

In that village Agnes Herbert had lingered behind; for her horse had fallen lame; and she had called one of the attendants of the court to examine the beast's foot, when she suddenly found an English gentleman, William Lovet, by her side. As soon as he perceived what was the matter, he sprang to the ground, and before the attendant could interfere had examined the horse's hoof, and extracted a stone which had fixed itself firmly between the frog and the shoe; then remounting, with a bound, he said, with a graceful inclination of the head, "That is soon remedied. He will go well now; but do not hurry him."

Agnes went on; and Lovet kept close to her side, saying, "I am mistaken, or I have had

the honour of seeing you before. My noble cousin Algernon was your prisoner during a night of sweet captivity."

Agnes bowed her head, answering, "I was obliged to obey the electress, even in a jest."

"I will not tell him," replied William Lovet, with a smile, "that you consented only from duty."

"His demeanour made the duty a pleasure," answered Alice.

"Ah, well may you say so," said Lovet, looking down thoughtfully; "he is a great winner of good opinions. Most men gain upon others by concealing all that is evil within them, Algernon by showing all that is in his heart, having nothing that is not noble to conceal;" and then, merely to break the discourse for a time, he pointed down the valley, saying, "What a beautiful scene this is! I know not whether it be more splendid, as when I saw it first, sleeping calmly in the evening sunshine, with the Neckar as placid and clear as a lake, or now, with yon

red and stormy sky, fading away into the night, and the tempestuous waters of the river below, foaming and fretting among the rocks and shallows."

"The Neckar is terribly swollen," replied the fair girl; "I never recollect to have seen it such a torrent, except in winter;" and, gazing down the dark mass of rushing waters, all turbid and confused, whirling in eddies near, and dashing fiercely over the dark rock beyond, a feeling almost of awe crept over her.

"It is very fine, indeed," rejoined Lovet; "and I can appreciate it better now than I could some time ago; for the society of my cousin has taught me to look upon the beauties of nature with a different and more marking eye than heretofore. There seems a grand harmony between his heart and everything that is lovely—except, indeed," he added, "the loveliness of your sex, fair lady; for I never knew him, that I remember, bestow ten words, even upon the fairest of them, in my life."

Agnes thought—"He has bestowed more on

me ;” but she did not reply : and William Lovet continued,—

“ Not that he is a woman-hater,” he said, for he is courteous and kind to all ; but, on the contrary, I believe he has formed so high an estimate of woman’s excellence, that he never finds his fancy fulfilled.”

“ If excellence is like other rare things,” answered Agnes, “ methinks it would take more than ten words to draw it forth.”

“ Ay, but he is very quick in his judgment,” said her companion. “ He, like many another man, imagines that nature has written much upon the countenance, that she tells much in the voice and manner ; and that, unless both be well tutored by long experience, a keen observer will read the book aright, and know much of the contents from the first page.—I have seldom known him wrong, I must confess.”

“ Such keen-sightedness may, perchance, be a dangerous quality,” the lady replied ; “ I mean, even for his own peace.”

“ Oh, no, he is ever on his guard,” replied

Lovet, in a frank tone; "he never spends any time on one whom he does not think worthy of esteem; but, with a courteous nothing, some filigree words of *haut-pas* commonplace, meant to cover very little reverence, retires into himself again."

Agnes ran rapidly over in her own mind all that had passed between her and Algernon Grey, and asked herself, "Has he done so with me?" The answer was evident; and she would fain have fallen into thought; but she did not wish to show, or to admit even to herself, that the matter was one worthy of much meditation; and she inquired almost immediately, "Does he deal thus with men?"

"Oh dear, no," answered Lovet; "there, knowing that he is safe, all the fine fancies of his mind, and all the generous feelings of his heart, become apparent. It were worth your while to overhear him pour forth, in words of impassioned eloquence, sentiments that are worthy of a better age than ours. You would find him a very different being from what he

has seemed. You must not think him, indeed, a cold and formal egotist, wrapped up in the contemplation of his own fancied excellence. I know, with women, this is often his character, though his person and his manners have great captivation for them too."

Agnes replied not ; but looked forward on the road before, saying, "It is growing very dark, we had better ride on faster. My horse goes easily now ;" and, shaking the rein, she put her jennet into a quick canter. In a moment after, a boy, dressed as a page, ran out from the wood, and, catching the rein of Lovet's horse, exclaimed, "Oh, sir, help here ; there is a gentleman badly hurt—dying, I am afraid."

"Is it your master ?" demanded Lovet, reining in his horse ; while Agnes paused, listening with eager ears beside him.

"No, no," answered the boy ; "it is the other gentleman."

"Then the other gentleman must take care of himself," answered Lovet. "Let go the rein, boy," he continued, in a sharp tone ; "the

stream is rising fast. Come on, come on, fair lady, or in this increasing darkness we shall get into mischief—come on, come on!” and he dashed forward along the path.

Agnes paused for an instant, and then exclaimed, “Run up to that large building, my good boy; they will give you speedy help.”

Then, seeing the danger of farther delay, she struck the jennet with the whip, and the beast darted on through the water upon the path. Lovet was now some thirty or forty yards in advance, and she saw his horse swerve away from some object in the wood near the boat-house. He kept him steady with the spur, however; and Agnes, as she came to the same spot, turned her head to see what had alarmed the beast. She just caught sight of some horses and a page gathered together in an opening of the road; but at that moment her jennet shied violently away at the unexpected sight. She tried to keep his head forward with the rein, but the beast reared and struggled against it; his feet passed the limit of the road; and, in a moment, horse and rider

plunged over into the midst of the rushing stream.

A loud and piercing shriek rang upon the air; Lovet turned his head and looked. Then, muttering between his teeth, "Ha! we must find another," he dashed on till he reached a spot where the road was free of water.

At the same moment, however, that the heartless exclamation passed his lips, the tall, powerful form of Algernon Grey appeared from the wood. The young cavalier cast a rapid glance over the dark and foaming surface of the stream. He saw a horse's head and neck rise above the water, and a woman's form, still keeping the seat, but evidently with a great effort, holding fast by the mane and the saddle. Another loud scream met his ear, and, with the rapid calculation of a quick, clear mind, he darted to the spot where the rude barks were moored, sprang into the first he could reach, cast it loose, and, with a vigorous effort, pushed it forth into the stream.

In the mean time, the horse, with the instinct

of self-preservation, turned itself in the struggling waters and endeavoured to breast the current, striking violently with its fore feet to keep its head above the torrent, and rolling fearfully under its fair burden. Agnes still clung to it, uttering shriek after shriek; but, whirled round by the eddies, in spite of all its efforts the animal was carried further down. A black looking rock still raised its round head partly above the waves; and as they were carried near, though the strength both of rider and beast was failing, the poor animal, by a violent effort, got its fore feet upon the rock, straining to clamber up. The attempt was fatal to the jennet: the water by the side was deep: there was no hold for its hind feet: the fore feet slipped; and back it rolled into the overwhelming torrent.

With heart failing and strength gone, Agnes loosed her hold and addressed one brief prayer to Heaven. But at that moment, a strong arm was thrown round her, and she felt herself dragged out of the water into something which

yielded and swayed under the pressure of her weight. She saw the struggling agonies of the horse ; she saw a human figure, and a boat half sinking with the water which had poured into it as it heeled in receiving her ; and then, with her brain whirling and her heart sick, she closed her eyes and pressed her fingers upon them.

At the same moment a hand grasped hers warmly, and a voice she knew, said : “ You are safe, you are safe ! God’s name be praised !

CHAPTER X.

AGNES HERBERT left her hand in that of her deliverer. For more than a minute she made no reply; she asked no question. The voice was enough; she knew who it was that had saved her. But she knew not as yet the perils which still hung over both him and her. At length he let go her hand; and she heard a noise in the frail skiff, which made her instantly open her eyes. Then it was she perceived the full danger of their actual situation. Even in the grey twilight she could see that the edge of the small boat was within an inch of the surface of the boiling stream, that the bark itself was half full of water, while Algernon Grey was busily

employed in baling it out with his hands, as the only means he had of freeing it even in a degree.

“Oh, thank you, thank you;” she cried; “for how much have I to be grateful!”

“Speak not of that, sweet lady,” answered the young Englishman; “but for pity’s sake, watch every thing with a keen eye as we are carried down the stream; for I cannot—dare not even attempt to reach the land. Tell me the moment you perceive a rock; for, with all this water in the boat, the least touch would sink us.”

“Here, take my velvet cap,” cried Agnes, “it is better than nothing;” but, ere Algernon Grey could use it twice to bale out a part of the water, his fair companion cried: “A rock, a rock!—There, on the right!” and Algernon, rising cautiously, took the short pole, which was the only implement the boat contained, and watched eagerly in the bow, till they neared a spot where one of the rude masses of granite still held its head above the current

which dashed and whirled around it. Then lightly touching it with the pole he kept the boat off in deeper water; and in another instant, scarcely able to keep his feet, found himself whirled round in the vortex, formed by the impeded torrent the moment it was free.

Oh, what a terrible period was the passage down that stream. At each instant some new danger beset them—now the rocks—now the shallows—now the rapids—now the eddies: no means of approaching the shore; and reasonable doubts, that any effort to do so would not lead to immediate destruction! The sky became darker and darker every moment; and, though by the aid of Agnes, afforded to the best of her power, a considerable portion of the water in the bark was cast back into the stream, still the fragile lightness of the skiff, and the depth to which it had sunk, rendered it little probable that those it contained would ever reach the land in safety. The close falling night, the roaring of the torrent, the howling of the wind blowing strong against them, the

agitated surface of the stream, now tossing them to and fro, now whirling them round and round, might well have daunted a strong heart inured to peril, much more that of Agnes Herbert. Algernon Grey felt for her terror, as well as for her danger; and ever and anon he said: "Let us trust in God, dear lady!—Fear not, fear not! There is a stronger arm than mine to protect you.—It is now that faith in Heaven is a comfort indeed."

But still, with eager eye, and steady nerve, and skilful hand, he watched and guided as well as he could, the boat along the troubled surface of the river.

Night fell; not a star was to be seen; the clouds swept thick and dark over the sky; but still, from time to time, a momentary light was afforded by a broad sheet of summer lightning, which for an instant cast a blue glare through the valley of the Neckar. The mountains were seen and lost; the rocks, the trees, the woods stood out and disappeared like phantoms in a dream; and at length, walls

and towers became, for one brief moment, visible ; and then all was black again.

“ We must be near the bridge,” said Agnes ; “ do you not hear the water rushing more fiercely ? Heaven help us now ! for, if we strike against the piers, we are lost.”

“ Sit quiet there,” answered Algernon ; “ I will go into the bow ; and be assured, dear lady, I will live or die with you. Only remember, if I am forced to swim, lie quiet on my arm ; for, if you clasp me, we both sink.”

“ I will not stir,” she said in a firm tone ; and Algernon Grey went carefully forward.

He heard the roar of the river, evidently dashing in fury against some obstruction ; and then he thought he caught the tones of human voices speaking above. Then came a broad sheet of lightning ; and he saw the bridge, with its manifold arches and its towered gates close at hand. He had but time to stretch forth his arm, and, with a violent effort, keep the boat from the pier, when it shot in fury

through the vault, and issued forth at the other side.

“We have to thank God again,” he said, regaining his balance, which he had nearly lost; “that danger is passed; and, if I remember right, the stream is clearer below.”

“Much, much,” said Agnes. “The rocks cease as soon as the mountains fall away; but there are many sand-banks.”

“We must watch still,” replied her companion, “but the stream seems already less rapid.”

The fearful rushing sound of the swollen Neckar diminished shortly after they had passed the bridge. They could even hear, or fancied that they heard, the hum of human voices from within the town. Lights were seen in various windows, and cheerful images of happy life came thick before their eyes, as they were hurried on, along the course of that dark head-long stream, with many a peril still before them.

“That must be the boat-house at Neunhim,”

said Agnes, at length, after a long silent pause ; “they have got a fire there, though the night is so sultry.”

“They must be caulking their boats, I think,” replied Algernon ; “and from the distance of the fire I should judge we are in the mid-stream. I will call to them as we pass—perchance they may hear and help us.”

A moment or two after he raised his voice and shouted aloud ; but no one answered—no form darkened the light in the hut, as if one of the inhabitants had come out to see who called. Rapidly the boat hurried past, and all was silence. The river was less turbulent, but seemed hardly less swift ; the noise subsided to a low whispering murmur, as the tide poured through the widening banks ; and faintly marked objects—willow, and shrub, and decayed oak, which were hardly distinguishable from the banks or the sky—seemed to move away with the speed of lightning.

At the end of about half an hour, during which the two had not raised their voices above

a whisper, Agnes said aloud, "There is a star! There is a star! The sky must be clearing. Do you not think it is lighter already?"

"Assuredly, dear lady," replied Algernon Grey, "the moon must soon rise; last night she was up by this time. See, there is a glow upon the clouds round what seems a hill-top there to the right."

"It is the Heiligberg," answered Agnes. "I have seen a gleam like that when the moon was coming up in the east. Oh! Heaven send that she may disperse the clouds and give us light."

Algernon Grey turned his eyes to the sky, and he found cause to hope. The clouds were breaking fast; the stars gleamed faintly out here and there; and the edges of the vapoury fragments looked white and fleecy. Alice gazed in the same direction; and for five minutes both were silent. Then the boat grated heavily with a sudden shock, and stood fast in the midst of the stream. The two voyagers were nearly thrown down by the con-

cussion, but Algernon exclaimed, "Fear not ! fear not ! We are on a bank, but no harm can happen ; the water must be very shallow here. Let us sit calm till the moon rises ; she must be even now just behind those hills. It is growing lighter every moment."

He was right in his judgment ; and in less than ten minutes the sky was clear or nearly clear of clouds. The moon, indeed, could not yet be seen ; but her pale silvery light spread over the whole heavens ; and everything around, to the eyes so long accustomed to utter darkness, appeared to stand out as if in the broad beams of day. Upon the left, the bank seemed somewhat steep and rugged, and no landing-place could be discerned ; but to the right was a piece of low sedgy ground, which the young Englishman doubted not was partially overflowed by the swollen stream.

"Do you know where we are, dear lady ?" he asked ; "I can see neither house nor village."

"I cannot tell," answered Agnes. "I should

think we must have passed Edingen by the time which has elapsed. Do you not think we could reach the land? Oh, let us try; for wherever it is, we shall be better there than on the bosom of this dreadful river."

Algernon Grey smiled upon her with that warm heartspringing look we only can give to those we have cherished or protected. "It is only dreadful now, this same fair Neckar," he said, "because we came too near it in an angry mood. To-morrow it will be as calm and sweet as yesterday."

"And would be so," answered Agnes, "if it flowed over our graves. It will ever be dreadful to me, from this night forth."

"Not so to me," replied her companion, "for it has afforded me a great happiness. But I will try to push the boat off the bank and guide it to yonder low ground on the right. Little will do it, if we can once get afloat again."

His efforts were not in vain, though it required all his strength to force the little skiff

from the firm bed into which the rapid current of the stream had carried it. As soon as it was free, however, he perceived an increase of the water in the bark ; and, judging rightly, that the sudden shock upon the shoal had seriously damaged it, he saw that not an instant was to be lost. Resting the end of the pole upon the sand-bank, as the boat swung round, he gave it a vehement impulse towards the shore. It drifted on with the current, but took an oblique direction, which Algernon Grey aided, using the boat-pole as a feeble sort of rudder ; but still the river was deep and swift, the bank some yards distant, and the water in the bark gaining fast.

“The boat seems sinking,” said Agnes, in a low, sad tone.

“Fear not ! fear not !” replied her companion, cheerfully ; “in a quiet stream, such as this is here, I could swim with you three times across without risk. But we are nearing the bank !” and, sounding the water with the pole, he found the bed of the river, and

pushed the boat to shore just as she was settling down.

It was a low swampy piece of ground that they touched, covered with long sedge and bulrushes growing upon overflowed land. Algernon Grey sprang out at once, and finding water still up to his knees, he leaned over into the boat, and took his sweet companion in his arms.

“I must carry you for a little way,” he said, “and now we may, indeed, thank God with our whole heart for a great deliverance. You shall walk as soon as we reach dry ground, dear lady, for you are wet, and I fear must be cold.”

“Oh, no,” she answered, “either terror or the sultry air has kept me warm enough. But how can I ever thank you for all you have done.”

She lay in his arms; her heart beat against his; her breath fanned his cheek when she spoke. What were the feelings of Algernon Grey at that moment? He would not ask

himself; and he was wise. He gave up his whole thoughts to her, to cheer, to soothe, to protect her, to remove from her mind not only the impression of the past peril, but also all feeling of the embarrassment and difficulty of her actual situation, left to wander, neither well knew whither, with a man, a young man whom she had known but a few days, in the darkness and solitude of night.

He felt his load light and his burden a pleasant one, it is true, as he bore her on for more than a hundred yards through the marsh. He would have willingly had her lie there far longer—perhaps for life; but still as soon as they came upon the dry sandy ground, he set her gently down and drew her arm through his.

“Now, sweet comrade,” he said, gaily, “we must fight our way to some village where you can find rest for the night. Do you not feel weary? Terror is a sad sapper of human strength.”

“Not so tired, perhaps, as I might expect to

be," answered Agnes, "considering that I had a long ride before this terrible event took place.—Alas, my poor jennet, that bore me so often and so well, I shall never see you more! —Yet I am wrong to speak so: my whole thoughts should be gratitude."

"We have both much cause for thankfulness," replied Algernon, "and see, dear lady, the beautiful moon, to guide us on our way, is rising over the hill, half hidden by the woods, half seen through the tree tops. How quickly she wanders on along her blue way. But we must take a lesson from her, and speed forward likewise. What path shall I choose? for I have no knowledge of this land."

"And I very little of this part," said the lady; "but one thing is clear; by bending our course towards the hills again, we shall at all events approach the town."

"That must be far," answered her companion, "and those small limbs of yours will hardly bear you thither to-night; but let us to the right at all events; as likely to find a

resting-place there as on any other path ;” and bidding her rest upon his arm for support, he led her on.

Theirs was a strange ramble through the wide fields and plains that stretch out between the foot of the Bergstrasse and the Rhine ; and yet not without deep interest to both. Each had at heart feelings of many a varied character sufficient to fill up long hours of dull life, and each was disinclined to dwell upon the most thrilling emotions of all ; but yet,—however they might fly to other subjects, how anxiously soever they might strive to withhold their thoughts from anything that might agitate or overpower, — still those emotions presented themselves in vague and indistinct forms, mingling with thought, seizing hold upon fancy, and giving a tone and colour to all that was said, without either of them being aware that they deviated from the ordinary course of conversation between persons of their birth and station. The scene, too, and the season, the hour, the atmosphere, the circum-

stances, the events that had lately taken place, the prospects of the future in their very indefinite obscurity, all had an influence, and seemed to combine to nourish a growing passion in their hearts. The moon rose bright from behind the trees upon the mountain tops, shining like the bright pure vision of young and innocent love. The clouds, which at the outset of their stormy and perilous course had swept like the evils of life over the whole sky, had now vanished as if by magic, leaving but here and there a fragment whirling upon the wind, to obscure the twinkling stars with its light veil. In the south-west, some half way up the heaven, shone a lustrous planet, beaming calm, steadfast, serene, like the undying light of hope; and, while opposite stretched in grand masses the hill-slopes of the Bergstrasse, beneath that star appeared the wavy outline of the Haardt mountains, still coloured with a purple hue, as if the rays of the departed sun had not yet entirely left them. Above, and to the south and east, all was

bright and silvery with the light of the risen moon. The stars themselves were there extinguished in the flood of splendour; but on the borders of the sky the twinkly lights of night looked out, like gems on the robe of their queen; and, from time to time, a bright meteor crossed the expanse, bursting from space, and dying ere it reached the earth, like the light thoughts of many a great mind, which perish in the brain that gives them birth.

The air was warm, and yet stirred by a strong breeze. There was a certain languor in it, a love-like, luxurious softness, disposing to gentle thoughtfulness; and a sweet perfume rose up from some of the shrubs of the field, mingling harmoniously with that bland air, and rendering its softening powers still greater. Over the wide plain which they traversed, the moon's beams fell bright, but not clear; for a thin vapour, too light to obstruct the view, and only serving to diffuse and generalize the light, rose up from the drenched fields in the warm air.

Rescued from death, and brought safely through innumerable perils by him on whose arm she leaned, the heart of Agnes Herbert might well dwell fondly on the thought of one whose words, whose manners, and whose look had before captivated her fancy, if not touched her heart. All the terrors she had felt, all the dangers she had passed, all the services he had rendered, all the kindness and tenderness he had shown that night, mingled strangely in memory with the words and the conduct of the two preceding evenings, with the interest she had previously felt in him, and with the account given of him by his companion and friend. But she, like himself, would not pause to think of such things—at least she would not scan them; and gladly she joined in conversation upon any topic, which would lead her mind away from that on which it lingered.

Many and varied, too, were the subjects with which he strove to entertain her, to wile her mind away from the thoughts of her situation, and to lighten the minutes of their

long and devious course, as they wandered on in search of some human habitation.

“How bright the night has become,” said Algernon Grey, after a pause. “Thus very often, when we least expect it, the storms that hang over some part of every man’s career, are wafted away, and all is clear again.”

“And but the brighter for the storm,” said Agnes.

“Ay,” he rejoined, “I fear me much, sweet lady, that we should never enjoy the sunshine but for the shade. It is in the varieties of creation and the constant changes of the world’s life, that the grand harmony of the whole consists. Let the tone of an instrument be ever so sweet, what effect would it produce upon the ear, if it had but one note? How poor is a concert with but two or three instruments! But in the succession and combination of many notes and many tones, how grand, how beautiful is the melodious harmony!—Skies ever blue, and pastures ever green,” he continued, changing to a gayer tone, “would, I believe, become very

dull and wearisome, notwithstanding all the verses of pastoral poets."

"So men think, I have been told," answered Agnes; "and that they choose their wives of tempers that may give them some variety."

"Yes, but there may be pleasant varieties, too," answered Algernon Grey, "even in one character. The storm is, in itself, a grand thing; but no man, methinks, would unroof his house to let it in; and, besides, dear lady, all things have their fitness. The drums and trumpets of an army are fine enough, mellowed by the open air; but who would think of enjoying a full choir thereof in a narrow room? After all," he continued, "in most classes of society this same marriage may be called a matter of fate rather than of choice, arranged by friends, or fixed by circumstances. Man little knows how rarely in life he is a free agent, and, above all, how rarely in this respect. Then again," he continued, "even when man or woman is truly said to make a choice, do

they ever know that which they choose. We walk about with vizards, my sweet friend; ay, even up to the steps of the altar; and the real face is seldom seen till the ring is on the finger."

He spoke very seriously; but Agnes replied with a laugh: "Perhaps, if it were not so, no one would marry at all; and yet," she added, in a graver tone, "if I thought I did wear one of these same masks, I would never rest till I had torn it off; for I would much rather never be loved, than lose the love I had obtained."

"A far happier fate!" answered Algernon Grey; and then changing the subject suddenly, he said, "How is it our discourse ever gets so grave? With this fair scene around us, and such a joyful escape as we have both had, methinks, we ought both to be more gay. It wants but the nightingale's song to make this moonlight night complete in beauty."

"Ah! but the dear nightingale," answered the lady, "is penurious of his melody here; and in the month of June, or, at the latest,

this last month, all his sweet notes come to an end. I know not why; for the people give the nightingale another flower; but, in my mind, he is always associated with the violet. His song is so sweet, so tranquil, so fragrant I may call it, so unlike the gay and perfumed rose, the flower of summer sunshine, whose blushing breast seems to court the gaze he shrinks from, that I can never fancy he would love the rose; while the calm violet, pouring forth her sweet breath in the shade, is his true image."

As she spoke, a distant light seemed to glimmer on the plain; but in a different direction to that in which their steps were bent; and they paused for a moment to remark it.

"It moves, it moves," said Algernon Grey; "it is but an ignis-fatuus. How many of them are there in this world. Each man of us, I believe, has his own, which he follows blindly. Love here, ambition there, avarice elsewhere, the desire of worldly honours, the gewgaw

splendours of pomp and state, the miserable false light of fanaticism, the dull foul lamp of superstition, are all so many Will-o'-the-wisps, leading us ever from the broad, straightforward way. So will not we, fair lady; but by your good leave, go upon this path, which will conduct us somewhere. Here are tracks of wheels, I see, with the moonlight glistening on the pools the storm has left—but your step seems weary. Do I go too fast?"

"Oh, no," she answered; "yet I confess, a little rest, a roof over my head, and a cup of cold water would not be unpleasant. The thought of a village and all its quiet comforts which that light afforded, has made me feel more fatigued since I saw it."

"Oh, yes," answered Algernon Grey, "there is something very sweet in human associations, which we know not till we are deprived of them for a time. The mind of man, I am sure, was never intended for solitude; for the very thoughts of home-happiness and quiet converse with our fellow-creatures—ay, even of

their proximity, though they be strangers to us, makes the heart yearn for all the warm companionships of society when we are deprived of it."

"But I have society," said Agnes, simply, "when you are with me."

Algernon Grey made no reply, but changed the subject to courts and courtly festivals, and then went on interweaving, as he was well able, lighter with graver conversation, and striving, not without success, to interest and occupy his fair companion's mind. The arts, then almost at their height, or at least very little declined, were one theme. Poetry furnished another. War, the chase, the pursuits of men of his own day, the habits of the world, the differences between countries, then marked out more strongly than at present, all passed under light review, and sometimes speaking gravely, sometimes jesting lightly, he gave that variety to all he said which he himself had praised.

Whether from weariness or from thoughtful-

ness, I know not, but Agnes grew more silent as they went on. Certain it is, that the words of William Lovet often came back to her mind. "He does not speak thus to every one," she thought; and she asked herself whether it was merely to cheer the way for her, that he thus put forth his powers, or that he really esteemed and held her highly. If the first, she was bound to be grateful, though, to say sooth, she would rather have believed the latter. Either conclusion, however, was pleasant to her—ay, very pleasant—almost too much so; for she grew frightened.

It lasted but an instant; and indeed then, with the happy sophistry of woman's heart, she quelled her own alarm. "Surely," she thought, "one may esteem and like without fear or danger. Am I such a vain fool as to believe that every man who may see something better in me than the light coquettes of a court, must therefore love me? Am I such a weak fool that I must needs love, unasked, the first man who seems to treat me as a rational creature? I am silly indeed even to let my thoughts rest on such

a matter. I will think of it no more. I will act as if such idle fancies had never crossed my brain, but as the heart prompts, and as nature leads."

She became more cheerful upon her delusion; but the way was long and wearisome. The soft ground loaded the tired foot; the turnings of the road disappointed expectation; and, though the bright moon still shone out to guide them, no village could be distinctly seen; for the thick orchards and small woods, which then occupied a large part of the valley of the Rhine, cut off the view from those who wandered in the low ground. The lady's garments too, fitted for the ride of the morning, were all unsuited to her long night ramble, and fatigue seized upon poor Agnes, and well nigh overpowered her. Twice she sat for some minutes by the road-side to rest; and, whenever the wetness of the swampy ground gave fair excuse, Algernon Grey took her in his arms and carried her; but still she was well nigh sinking from pure exhaustion, when a village clock struck clear and loud the hour of eleven. No great

distance could exist between the musical bell and the ears that so gladly heard it; and with renewed hope and strength they let themselves be guided by the sound through the trees, till the tones of laughing voices came upon the air.

“There must be a village close at hand,” said Algernon Grey, “and happily some Fair or merry-making seems to have kept the good peasants up and waking. See there are cottages!” and the moment after they entered the long street of a small hamlet with the church at the further end, and beyond, rising high above the houses, the tower of some old castle built upon a mound.

The cottages were all dark and silent, and the merry voices they had heard seemed to go on before them singing in chorus.

S O N G.

Bruise the grape! draw the wine!

Oh the fruit of the vine!

It was given to console for the flood:

To bring light to the eye,

And to raise the heart high,

And to warm the old world with new blood.

When shut up in the ark,
Noah swam in the dark,
And no dove had returned to his breast;
He dreamed a glad dream,
That he saw a red stream
Flow forth from the cluster when pressed.

“ We are weary,” he said,
“ We are cold, and half dead,
But there ’s comfort beneath this grim sea:
When we touch the hill top
The vine shall spring up,
And its warm juice shall set the heart free.”

Bruise the grape! draw the wine!
Oh, the fruit of the vine!
It was given to console for the flood:
To bring light to the eye,
And to raise the heart high,
And to warm the old world with new blood.

Thus sung the peasants as they walked along,
and Algernon Grey exclaimed, with a smile,
“ Their song gives good council, sweet lady.
Though I saw last night that you were no wine
drinker, you must now even consent to take
some of the juice of the grape, whose qualities
these good men celebrate. The inn where they

have been tasting it cannot be far, and you will at length have rest and refreshment."

"Rest, rest," said Agnes, "is all I need;" but Algernon would not believe that food too was not wanted.

At length a light was seen streaming forth from a door not far from the church; and a good stout country girl, throwing forth into the midst of the street some torn and scattered flowers, which had decked the little hall of the hostelry for the country festival, appeared at the door. It was a glad sight for poor Agnes Herbert, and she drew a long deep sigh, while Algernon Grey inquired if they could have refreshment there, and rest for the night.

The girl seemed hardly to comprehend him, but called the bustling landlady, who gazed at the two gaily dressed, but worn and travel-stained strangers, for a moment with looks of doubt and wonder. Agnes, however, in few quiet words, explained her situation, using, as far as she knew it, the jargon of the country; and the good woman's whole manner was changed in a

moment. Instead of doubt and suspicion of her guests, which she had before displayed, she was now all motherly tenderness towards the young and beautiful creature before her, although she was not without some embarrassments, also, as to the accommodation of her unexpected visitors. Situated in a remote and distant village, where a traveller very rarely staid for the night, she had neither room nor bed prepared; and, though plenty of supper, she said, was to be obtained in a moment, and as good wine as any in the Circle, she did not see how she could get two beds ready, although her daughter would willingly give up her own for the young lady's convenience. Algernon Grey relieved her from a part of her difficulties by telling her that he could sleep very well where he was, and that the table or the bench in the large room, where she had received her guests, would form a bed good enough for him, if she would prepare a room for Agnes as soon as possible. With this latter injunction she promised to comply; but there were two obstacles to its literal fulfilment, namely,

first, the good landlady's determination that her guests should partake of a supper before they slept; and secondly, that the hostess herself, and all her people were boors of the Palatinate, who are not celebrated for the quickness of their evolutions.

In vain did the young gentleman hurry her; in vain did Agnes protest that she wanted rest before all things; half a dozen dishes, dressed in various strange manners, were placed on the table before them, as they sat by a dim and comfortless lamp, the mistress of the house observing sagely, that it could do them no harm on earth to eat some supper after so many adventures, and that, in the mean time, the lady's bed could be prepared.

After having discovered that they were in the village of Shriesheim, Agnes Herbert and Algernon Grey were left for more than half an hour alone in the dinner-room of the little inn; and deeply did the fair girl feel his conduct during that time; for although, with kindness and every gentle attention, he pressed her to

take some food and drink some wine ; though, with cheerful gaiety he strove to amuse and cheer her, yet there was no token of respect that he did not show, to diminish or remove any embarrassment springing from her position with regard to himself. He made her smile ; he even made her laugh ; he awakened her fancy, to lead her thoughts to gay and happy images : he rendered his conversation light, playful, and sunshiny, but took care that it should be sufficiently reserved to place his fair companion at her ease, and to make her almost forget that she was not with him in one of the saloons of the palace of Heidelberg. Her weariness somewhat decreased as she sat and listened ; and, to tell the truth, by the time the landlady returned to conduct her to her bedroom, Agnes Herbert was more disposed to remain where she was, and listen to sounds which fell with dangerous softness on her ear.

Nevertheless she rose instantly, and held out her hand to her companion, bidding him farewell for the night. He took it, and pressed his

lips upon it, wishing her good rest, and fair dreams.

Agnes gazed upon him with a smile as he did so, saying, “Methinks it is I ought to kiss your hand, and thank you again and again for all your acts of kindness in every way, all of which I have felt, from the saving of my life to the soothing of my mind; but I must leave others to do it who are more capable—I have no words.”

CHAPTER XL

ONE of the first cares of Algernon Grey, when Agnes had left him for the night, was to send off a messenger to the castle of Heidelberg, to announce, even at that late hour, that the lady was in safety. It was with difficulty, indeed, that any one could be procured to undertake the task; for Germany is a country in which there are some things that people will not do even for money. But a man was at length found to walk the distance, and to set out at once. The young Englishman's next thought was how to obtain horses for the following morning; but it was not till the messenger had departed that this occurred to him; and when

it did he felt some doubt as to whether a woman's saddle could be obtained for the lady.

The good hostess undertook the task, however, without making any difficulty, naming a neighbouring farmer's horse for himself, of whose qualities he was very willing to run the risk, and saying that their minister's daughter had a nice ambling pad, which she would lend very willingly to bear that pretty lady to the castle.

This being settled, and pure water having been procured to wash away from his face and neck the traces of all he had lately gone through, Algernon Grey was left alone in the hall, to find repose as he best could. But for a long time he sought no rest, at least for the busy brain and anxious thought. During the three or four hours last past, his mind had been fully occupied, at first with perils and dangers, and with a sweeter and not less engrossing task at an after period; but now, suddenly reverting to still earlier events, he turned to inquire what might be the result to the adversary whom he had

met in the wood, of his sudden departure from the scene of strife. Apprehensions crowded upon him for the fate of the Baron of Oberntraut. The page, he feared, might have seen him hurry to the rescue of Agnes, and, thinking only of duty to his master, might have neglected to fulfil the orders he had received, in his anxiety to trace and assist him. The wounded man might have been left to bleed to death on the meadow, and, though he felt that he was not to blame, yet Algernon Grey would have given a king's ransom to be sure that his opponent had met with proper aid and treatment.

Thought, he knew, was fruitless, upon this subject at least ; and yet he continued to think upon it for some time, till the image of Agnes Herbert began to mingle with these waking reveries, and with it a new source of anxiety ; she was so beautiful, so gentle, so full of every grace and quality which he had dreamed of as perfection in woman, that he could not but think of her with tenderness. He would not believe that he thought of her

with love ; and yet he dreaded his own sensations. Once more he made strong resolutions to quit Heidelberg and the Palatinate immediately—to see her no more—to wander far—to forget her. Poor youth ! he had some experience of the world, but he had not learned how completely all human resolutions are the sport of circumstances ; he had not yet learned that if in our weakness or our passions we do not break them voluntarily, there are a thousand little incidents over which we have no control, which step in between us and their execution. His determination was firm and strong, however ; his conviction of the right course was not in the least shaken ; and, making up his mind at length to accompany Agnes back to the castle, letting her see no change or difference in his manner, but to leave her there and to depart the next day, he seated himself near the table, bent his head upon his arms, and gradually sank into sleep.

In that strange, mysterious state, when a dull heavy curtain falls between the mortal

senses and all their external objects, when life alone remains, and the spirit is cut off from all communication with the rest of creation, while fancy yet from time to time—ay, and memory too—wakes up with strange caprices, to deal with past and future things;—in that great mystery of sleep, which none have solved, notwithstanding the laborious idleness of their efforts, images, not new perhaps, presented themselves to his eyes, but surely arranged in novel and fantastic forms. Neither was it remembrance of the things last past that called up the visions to his eyes; he saw not his adversary lie bleeding on the grass; he saw not the drowning horse, the sinking girl; no fierce engulfing stream rolled before his eyes; no whirling bark bore him onwards through the darkness of the night. Yet Agnes was with him in his dreams. Bright, as in her festival beauty she had led him through the castle halls, she now guided him through gardens of sweet flowers, stopping here and there to pluck them, and wind them into coronets for his brow. Then came another form across them,

beautiful but fierce like a young tigress, and aimed a dagger at his heart, when William Lovet grasped her hand and plunged it in her own bosom.

The vision passed away, more profound sleep succeeded; and when Algernon Grey woke on the following morning, the early light was shining through the uncurtained windows of the room. His toilet was necessarily brief; but the matutinal peasantry were all astir before it was finished. A substantial breakfast was soon laid out for him and his fair companion; and, after waiting for a few moments, he sent up to inquire if she were ready. Agnes had been long up, and immediately joined him in the hall, refreshed with sleep, though somewhat pale with the terrors and fatigues of the preceding day. All her cheerfulness had returned, but yet it is an invariable law of human nature that no great emotions can be felt without leaving some permanent effect behind. The scenes she had gone through, the agitation she had felt, even the feelings she had experienced while wandering through the

fields at night with Algernon Grey, had made their impression, never to be erased. I will not attempt to look into her heart, for she would not look into it herself; but yet there were external signs and indications, which, to any experienced and observing eye, would have told the change. There was a deeper tone in her manner; there was more soul and spirit in her look; there was a thoughtfulness even in her gayest smile. All spoke of the heart, and of newly-awakened sensations therein; and it seemed to Algernon Grey, as she advanced, and, raising her eyes full of deep thankfulness to his face, placed her hand in his, that she had now all which had been previously wanting to render her beauty well nigh divine.

The meal passed gaily over; they spoke of the adventures of the past day with the pleasant gratulation of dangers ended. They spoke of their morning ride back to Heidelberg with the sweet anticipation of pleasure to come; and, when breakfast was done, they mounted the two horses which had been procured for them, and, with a youth on a third to bring

those which they rode back, they set out, with the bright morning sun shining on their way. The clouds and storms of the preceding day were all dispersed; and, in one bosom, at least, was a gay and cheerful heart, unburdened with anticipations of evil, or regret for any act in the past. As they rode along at the best pace which their horses could command, Agnes poured forth to her companion's ear all her bright and sparkling thoughts, lighted up by that purest of enjoyment, which the expectation of giving pleasure to others affords to a fine spirit. She talked of the joy her uncle would feel in clasping her in his arms again, after he had thought her lost for ever; of the calm, but hardly less heartfelt satisfaction of the Princess Dowager in seeing her once more; and, although in Algernon's bosom many a bitter and painful thought arose, many a struggle, when he fancied that the last hours of their companionship were passing away for ever, he would not suffer any appearance of his own gloom to bring a shadow over her young happiness.

Thus fled the time; till, once more turning

along the course of the Neckar, the town and the hills, and the laughing valley, and the proud castle, appeared before their eyes; and, crossing the bridge, and threading the narrow streets, they began to ascend the hill. For one moment they paused as they went up, to breathe their horses and to gaze over the scene; and Agnes, before they proceeded, let fall her rein, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed, "I never thought to see all this again."

Her eyes were raised to heaven in thankfulness, and then turned with a momentary glance to Algernon Grey. From an impulse she could not resist, she held out her hand to him, saying, simply, "But for you—but for you!"

They rode on more slowly, and, as they entered the court-yard of the castle, Algernon Grey said, "I must here leave you, dear lady, I believe; but be assured, that to have rendered you service in a moment of peril has been a happiness which will brighten many a future hour."

"But you will come with me to my uncle?" replied Agnes, with a start, and a look almost of

alarm. "Oh, come, I beseech you; it is but fit that the deliverer of his child—of one that he loves as his child—should take her back to his bosom. Oh, come."

"If it will give you pleasure," replied Algernon Grey, with a faint smile; for he could not resist the temptation to linger still for a moment beside her, and he felt himself weak.

At the farther angle of the court there were a number of gentlemen and officers collected together, talking in the morning air; and, when Agnes and her companion rode up, several of them sprang forward to assist her in dismounting; but she paused till Algernon Grey was by her side, and then suffered him to lift her from her horse. Returning courteous, but brief answers to the congratulations, which showed how much anxiety had been felt for her fate during the preceding night, she looked round to her companion, saying, "Now I will lead the way to my uncle. I know he would never forgive me, if I did not bring you to him at once."

But, at that moment, a tall, elderly man,

dressed in a military garb, advanced and laid his hand on Algernon Grey's shoulder, saying, "I am sorry for the task, sir, but I am commanded to arrest you, wherever I may find you, in the Elector's name. I have sought for you all through the town this morning. Give up your sword."

Algernon Grey merely smiled, replying, "I have no sword to give up, sir. May I know my offence?"

"Your fatal encounter with the Baron of Oberntraut," replied the old officer; "his father last night formally charged you with the murder of his son; and the Elector issued instant orders for your apprehension."

Agnes had turned deadly pale; and she raised her hand to her head, and thought deeply for a moment.

"Where is the Elector?" she exclaimed, at length; "I will see his Highness myself.—This gentleman saved my life; he rescued me, when all others abandoned me; he perilled existence a dozen times for a person whom he hardly knew—and is this his reward?"

“Fear not, dear lady,” replied Algernon Grey; “this can have no bad results—a little inconvenience, but nought else. I met the Baron of Oberntraut, as one honourable gentleman meets another, when called by him to the field; I met him without provocation on my part, without anger or animosity, in a place of his own choosing, on a quarrel of his own seeking. I spared him as long as I could; and, though I deeply grieve to hear that he is dead, I will ever maintain, that the wound I gave him was only in defence of my own life.”

“He was supposed to be dying, though not dead,” replied the old officer, “when the news came last night. This morning we have no intelligence.”

“Where is the Elector?” asked Agnes again; “can any one tell me where I shall find him?”

“He was in the Princess’s cabinet a few minutes ago, fair lady,” said a young gentleman, stepping forward; “I do not think he has come forth yet.”

With a quick step, a flushed cheek, and an eager eye, Agnes hurried away; and, at the

saine moment, the old officer whispered to a page who stood by : “ Run and tell old Oberntraut, he may want a word or two.” He then turned to his prisoner, saying : “ As I know not what may be the Elector’s pleasure, sir, concerning you, it may be as well, that I should take you to his presence as speedily as possible. We can wait for him in his audience room, till he comes forth from the Princess’s apartments. Have the goodness to follow me.”

Thus saying, he led the way to the castle, up the stairs and through a gallery above ; and then opening the door, he conducted his prisoner across a sort of waiting-hall, which displayed numerous doors on either side. At one of these, as he crossed, Algernon Grey beheld his fair companion of the night before, standing with a page by her side. Her beautiful head was bent down ; her eyes fixed upon the ground ; and she moved not in the least, though the sound of steps must have reached her ear. The old officer then opened a door on the opposite side ; and the young Englishman followed into a small room containing but one

chair. There they paused for about ten minutes, left entirely alone; and, at the end of that time, the old chamberlain, who had so unwillingly introduced Algernon and his cousin to the Elector's presence on the night of the nineteenth of August, passed through with a hurried step. As he went, his brow gathered into a heavy frown; and he glanced at Algernon Grey, with his teeth set and his fingers clasped tight upon the sheath of his sword. A moment after a bustle was heard without; and the door being thrown open, the Elector entered with a stern brow, accompanied by several of his officers, and followed by Agnes Herbert and the chamberlain. Without noticing in any manner the young Englishman, the Prince advanced towards the chair, but did not sit down, turning as soon as he had reached it, and looking round.

"May it please your Highness," said the gentleman who stood by Algernon's side, "I have, according to your commands, arrested Master Algernon Grey here present, and crave your further orders concerning him."

The young gentleman took a step forward

before the Prince could reply ; and with a calm and well-assured countenance demanded, almost haughtily, for what offence his liberty had been abridged. The proud spirit of the free islander, the source of so much that is good, and alas, too often the source of so much that is disagreeable, showed itself for a moment in his tone and manner, though he took care to use all courtly terms and titles of reverence, and in the end softening his lofty bearing, professed himself ever willing to abide by the laws of the land in which he sojourned, adding, “But knowing my innocence of all offence, I claim fair and equal justice, and a full inquiry, ere I am punished in any shape.”

“Justice and fair inquiry you shall have, sir ; fear not,” answered the Elector, somewhat offended by his bold tone. “It is fortunate that we have been in England, and know that noblemen of that country fancy themselves equal to the princes of other lands, or we might think your bearing somewhat strange.—My lord of Oberntraut, you laid a charge against this gentleman yesterday late at night

—a most serious charge. We had not at that hour time to inquire fully; but will now hear you further.”

“I charged him, your Highness, with the murder of my son,” exclaimed the old chamberlain, coming forward, “the cool deliberate murder of my only child.”

“What is he dead, then?” inquired the Elector, with a look of stern grief.

“Not yet, sir,” replied the other, “but he is dying. I saw him an hour ago—his voice could be hardly heard—his eyes were faded and dull, and his strong limbs, which have so often served the state, were feeble as an infant’s; but this man, I say—this stranger who comes here, it may be as a spy into your court, seeks a quarrel with one of your best servants, lures him at nightfall into a remote place, and there, having left the two pages behind that no eye may see, slays a man, who, as we all know, in fair honest fight and deeds of arms, had no superior—scarce, indeed, an equal. It is of this I charge him, your Highness—it is for this I demand his punishment. Justice I will have

by one means or another, and if by honied words, which he can well use, he should escape the arm of law, let him look well to himself, for I and mine will do ourselves right at last."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the Elector; "you injure a good cause by such rash threats.—What would you, lady? I am glad to see you safe.—I will speak with you presently.—This is no scene for you."

"Pardon, your Highness," answered Agnes, with the bold bearing of strongly roused feelings; "it is a scene in which I must bear a part whether I will or not. Listen to me for a moment. To this noble gentleman I owe my life, and I must raise my voice against his enemies. As I followed your royal lady here last night, my horse, frightened at some object in the wood, plunged over the bank into a torrent against which no living thing could struggle. He perished there, poor beast! Your Highness's servants saw it. They can tell you all."

"I have heard, I have heard," answered Frederic, bowing his head.

“All abandoned me,” continued Agnes.—
“Your followers—some of them stout soldiers—the gentleman who rode by my side, those who went before and they who followed—not one would venture on that frightful stream to aid a drowning girl, when this noble man, almost a stranger, in a frail bark, not stronger than a toy, which sank ere we reached land, came, found, and saved me. Many a time that night he perilled life for me—for one without a claim upon his goodness. Ay, at the very moment when this old lord declares he had just committed cool deliberate murder, he risked life, and all life gives, on the first generous impulse of his heart. Is this likely, noble prince?—Is this possible? Oh, no! the same high heart that bade him venture on that dark stream, at the scream of a dying girl, be you sure has ruled his actions whatever they were, in his dealing with a proud adversary. Believe it not, believe it not! or else believe that honour is a name, truth falsehood, and noble self-devotion but a murderer in disguise.”

She spoke eagerly, vehemently, and her beautiful countenance, lighted up with the roused energies of her heart, beamed like that of some reproving angel, till in the end the emotions that she felt overpowered her, and the light went out in tears.

“My lord and prince!” cried the old lord of Oberntraut, his bitter rage taking the form of scorn under the restraint, such as it was, of a formal sense of courtesy towards a woman. “It is easy to understand and to forgive a lady pleading for her lover. But let us have done with such trash now. Love tales are not for such occasions!”

“Sir, you imply, if you do not assert, a falsehood,” said Algernon Grey, sternly; “the very name of love has never been mentioned between this lady and myself. When I pushed off the skiff to save her, I saw not even who she was. But I will beseech you, dear lady, to leave us. In the justice of this noble prince I will fully rely, and, by staying, you only expose yourself to wrong constructions from the fury of a rude old man.”

The lord of Oberntraut laid his hand upon his sword, and partly drew it; but one of the attendants held his arm, whispering a caution in his ear; and Agnes replied, "I go then, but only to call a better voice than mine to advocate the same cause."

"Now, Master Algernon Grey," said the Elector, "what have you to say to this charge brought against you? Speak, if you will; but if you do, I need not, I think, remind you that the truth is ever best, and in this case more especially, as it must undergo full inquiry before judges who will not be deceived."

"It is my habit, sir, to speak the truth," answered the young Englishman; "and if the Baron of Oberntraut be still living, I require that his statement be taken from his own lips. He is a brave and noble gentleman, and will not belie even an adversary. Let his statement be compared with mine, and they will be found to tally, I am sure. I declare then, in this presence, that he fixed a quarrel on me for I know not what: that he himself led me to the spot, made all the arrangements, attacked

me first, I passively parrying his thrusts till the last moment, and then only lunged in self-defence. He will tell you, too, that I did all in man's power to staunch the blood and give him help; and I should have returned to remain with him, after having sent my page for aid, had not that lady's cries called me to another task, and the swollen Neckar borne us both far away. Let his own boy be asked if he did not hear him give me directions on the road he followed, invite me to dismount, and lead the way himself. This is my simple tale, and, unless a gentleman and a soldier may without shame refuse such invitations, I have done no wrong in yielding to his."

"In this land, sir," answered the Elector, sternly, "a gentleman and a soldier not only may without shame, but must, refuse such invitations; for, by my own law, now of some four years' date, all such encounters are prohibited most strictly."

"Then his be the blame," replied Algernon Grey, "for leading a stranger unacquainted

with the law your Highness names, to violate it. Gladly would I have avoided that which I personally do not approve, but which habit not only sanctions but requires."

"My noble prince, this tale must be false," exclaimed the old lord of Oberntraut; "you know my son right well, and that he is not one rashly to violate your Highness's laws."

Frederic smiled; and, notwithstanding the sad importance of the occasion, a light murmur, somewhat like a laugh, ran round the court, to hear so peaceable a character given to the young baron. But the Elector immediately exclaimed, "Silence, gentlemen. This is unbecoming! I am sorry, sir, to show severity to any one of your land," he continued, speaking to Algernon Grey; "but, at all events, till your adversary's state is better known, and till we are sure what the termination will be, you must endure confinement as best you may; I will myself inquire of those who have tended his wounds, whether they are mortal or not, and, when they shall judge it necessary, will cause his own account to be taken from his lips.

Fear not : you shall have justice ; but at present you must retire. My good lord of Helmstadt, will you see him conveyed to the great tower, near the English building. Let him have the vacant rooms on the third floor ; and I will afterwards put him in ward of some inferior officer."

"Look that you hold him safe, Helmstadt !" exclaimed the old lord of Oberntraut ; "for I call Heaven to witness that I will require blood for my son's blood, if not from him, from those who hold him."

"Silence, sir !" said the Elector, "and quit my presence ;" and waving his hand, as signal, to the lord of Helmstadt, then chief marshal, to remove his prisoner, the Elector turned to the Chancellor, Christopher of the Green, by Wegersberg, and spoke to him for several minutes, in a low tone.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the large round room I have described in a former chapter, with its column in the midst, decked out with arms and banners, just as it had appeared when Algernon Grey first saw it, sat Colonel Herbert, the English Knight as he was called at the castle, at the same hour when his visitor was brought before the Elector on the charge of murder. His brow was grave and thoughtful; his eyes bent down, as if he were considering some subject deeply. Nevertheless, it must be said that his mind was not affected by any immediate apprehensions for his niece, though he was not yet aware of her return to the castle; but Algernon Grey's message of the night before had reached him duly, showing that

she had been rescued from the great peril which she had encountered.

The first news of the preceding evening had represented her as lost to him for ever. When her horse had plunged over, the greater part of the train of the Prince and Princess had, as I have shown, galloped quickly forward. William Lovet had followed immediately after the accident; and the small party of servants and attendants, whom Agnes and the Englishman preceded, saw the accident as well as he did; but not one of them ventured to make an effort for the lady's deliverance. All that they thought fit to do, was to hurry on as quickly as possible, and to inform the Elector of what had occurred, very naturally believing the case to be a hopeless one, and the lady lost beyond recovery. Frederic, for he was in truth a kind-hearted and an amiable prince, at once stopped the cavalcade, and eagerly consulted with those around him what was to be done. But all agreed, that long ere assistance could be rendered, the lady must have perished, so that it was in vain to attempt aught for her deliverance. Elizabeth of England, though not

more hopeful than the rest, urged immediate search, or exertion in some way ; but her voice was overruled by those who felt that no exertion could be successful ; and one old man even ventured to say,—“ It is all in vain. The Neckar will have its dues ; a certain number are drowned in it every year ; and if it had not taken this one, it would have taken another.”

In deep, stern, solemn bitterness of heart ; with that feeling of despair which nothing can produce but the loss of the only one truly and entirely beloved, Colonel Herbert had passed the hours from the moment that the first news had been communicated to him till he heard a hurried foot ascending the stairs of the tower ; and then he started up and gazed towards the door. He had not wept—his was too stern and powerful a nature for tears ; but, concentrated in the heart’s deepest recesses, the feelings which in other persons so often melt away like spring thunderclouds in falling drops, burned and seared, till all seemed desolate as a desert.

“ They have found the body,” he said to himself, when he heard the step ; but his servant

ran in with a face of joy, exclaiming, "The lady is saved, Sir Henry, the lady is saved; here a peasant has come from the country to bear the news to the castle."

"Where is he?" exclaimed Herbert; "bring him hither—quick!"

"Alas! sir," cried the man; "the hall-porter has let him go."

Herbert seized him by both the hands, and gazed earnestly in his face,—“Are you lying?” he exclaimed; “Are you lying?”

“No, Sir Henry, I would not lie for the world—on such a matter as this,” the servant answered. “The hall-porter sent his boy; and before I would bear you the news I went up to inquire; but there I found it was beyond all doubt. The man had come on foot three or four leagues from a village down the river; and the gentleman, who saved the lady, had given him two gold pieces to bear the tidings. He fancied himself as rich as a prince, the porter said; and had gone to get himself drink in the town.”

“Enough, enough!” answered Herbert; “a

man would not give gold to spread such a report falsely. Leave me!" and, seating himself at his table again, he remained in deep thought, without one exclamation of joy, with scarcely the movement of a muscle, till the castle clock struck two; and then, retiring into his bedroom, he laid himself down and slept profoundly. When he rose on the following morning, a new train of somewhat anxious thoughts took possession of him. "Who was it that had saved his Agnes?" he asked himself. "Who was it that had borne her company through the past long night? Was it one who could be trusted? One who would respect the purity of her mind and heart, and guard her like a child from all that would sully as well as injure?"

He was still busy with these fancies, when his ear caught a light step on the stair; he knew it well; and, starting up, threw wide the door. In an instant Agnes was in his arms, and a few moments were given up to joy and gratulation. But the lady soon turned to a different theme. "I will tell you all here-

after," she said; "but at present you must come to the Elector to plead for and defend the saviour of your Agnes;" and with rapid and eager words she gave a clear brief account of all that had taken place since her arrival at the castle.

Herbert gazed upon her glowing countenance, as she spoke, with a thoughtful and inquiring look, and then said in a low voice: "So it was this Englishman, then, was it?"

"Yes," exclaimed Agnes, eagerly; "all others abandoned me; even his own cousin, who had been riding by my side, spurred on and left me. But for him, I must inevitably have perished."

"And he fought Oberntraut, too," continued Herbert, in the same tone, "and vanquished him,—that were no easy task. But I knew what would take place between those two—I saw it; but deceived myself as to the time, else I would have stopped it."

"Nay, come," said Agnes, laying her hand upon his arm; "if you come not speedily they will have sent him to prison."

“Stay awhile, my child,” answered Herbert.
“So this young man was kind to you?”

“Most kind,” replied Agnes, somewhat surprised at her uncle’s manner: “nothing that could be done to make me comfortable was left undone by him.”

“He has seen much of the world,—been in courts, and camps, and corrupt foreign lands,” said Herbert, musing. “Where slept he at the place of your last night’s rest?”

“In the hall below,” answered Agnes.

“And doubtless, by the way, he cheered and comforted you?” continued her uncle.

“With the kindest courtesy,” replied the lady.

“And with tales of love?” said Herbert.

“Not one word,” cried Agnes, with the warm blood mounting into her cheek; “nought that could be so construed for an instant. What is it that you seek to know?” she added, pressing her hand upon his arm, and looking full into his face. “Why do you speak so strangely? I have nought to tell—not a syllable to say that your ear would not be well pleased

to receive. If you seek to know how my deliverer treated me—it was as a kind and gentle brother towards a sister just saved from danger,—somewhat colder, perhaps; than a brother might have been, but still as tender, as considerate, as feeling. He aided, supported, cheered, strengthened me, with more reverence than was needed, perhaps; but yet I thanked him for it, for it set me at my ease; and through those long hours I walked, hanging on his arm as if it had been your own, with the same confidence and trust, and to the end was not deceived; for not one word, nor act—and I am sure I may say thought also—was there which could give me even a moment's pain.—Surely you do not doubt your Agnes?”

“No, no, my child,” cried Herbert, throwing his arms round her; “I wished but to be sure that this young man was what I thought him.——Now let us go, I am ready to plead his cause for you, and I trust I shall not plead it vainly. I saw the challenge given, and though I was not near enough to hear the words, feel sure that it came from Oberntraut. Come,

Agnes," and, with the lady leaning on his arm, he walked quickly from his own tower to that part of the castle where the apartments of Frederic and Elizabeth were situated. He was there informed that the Elector was still in the small hall, as it was called; and, hurrying thither, he threw open the door. The figure which his eye first sought did not appear; for Algernon Grey had already been removed. But the Elector was still standing at the farther end of the room, conversing with the gentlemen around him; and Herbert advanced at once towards the Prince, bowing low as he approached.

"Ah, Herbert, is that you?" exclaimed Frederic, when he saw him; "I wish to speak with you a moment alone.—Gentlemen, I need not detain you longer. Stay you, fair lady: I have counsel for your ear also."

At the hint thus given, the room was instantly cleared of all persons but the Prince, the English officer, and his niece; and, as soon as the door was closed, Frederic ex-

claimed: "What is it, Herbert? there seems an angry spot upon your brow. The affair of this young nobleman, I will warrant. Well, that will be easily explained."

"You mistake me, noble Prince," answered Herbert; "I may be deeply grieved to find that a noble gentleman, who has not only just saved this dear child's life at the hazard of his own, but through a long night, when she had no one else to protect her, has treated her with that mingled respect and courtesy—that tenderness, united with reverence, which none but the noble heart can feel or show—should have fallen under your indignation; but anger, on my part, towards the Prince I serve, is out of the question."

"You have heard the cause?" said Frederic, interrupting him; "this sad duel with young Oberntraut."

"Oh, yes, your Highness, I know all that," replied Herbert; "I saw Oberntraut seek the quarrel, and give the challenge."

"Then you are sure it came from him?" inquired Frederic.

“I heard not the words which were spoken, sir,” answered Herbert; “but there are looks and gestures as good as any words, and from them I feel quite sure that the challenge came from him, who has fallen, it seems. Besides, it was he who stopped my young friend, calling him from my side, and, as he did so, I marked the frowning brow and flashing eye—the lip that quivered with scorn and anger, and the impatient gesture of the hand. It must have been hard to bear that demeanour of his, and yet the other’s was calm and grave, as if resisting passion rather than yielding to it. Let the matter be inquired into, my Prince; and if it be as I say, surely you will not visit the faults of Oberntraut on the head of Master Grey, even by imprisonment.”

“For his own safety, Herbert,” replied the Prince, putting his hand upon his arm, “he must endure confinement for a while. If this young lord recovers we can easily settle all differences between them, and quiet down the old man’s rash heat; but if he dies, you know old Oberntraut, and are well aware he would

move heaven and earth, and take any means, lawful or unlawful, for revenge. In that case, we must get this young gentleman out of the Palatinate as secretly as may be. In the mean time, however, he must be a prisoner; for a chance-meeting between him and the old man might be fatal to one or both."

"I trust your Highness will take care then," answered Herbert, "that all shall be done to make his imprisonment light."

"As light as may be," replied the Prince. "I have been forced to put on a stern face, and use harsh words, in order to satisfy my court that I show no unjust favour to one of my fair lady's countrymen; but, at the same time, I never dreamt of dealing hardly with him, and I was but even now thinking of giving him into your custody, my good friend. Then you can attend to all his wants and wishes,—but you must be responsible to me for his safe custody, and you shall swear, upon your honour, that by no indulgence you grant him, shall he be seen beyond the walls of his present

prison at any time when old Oberntraut is within the castle-gates."

"Then the youth must be mewed up altogether," answered Herbert, "unless we bring him out to walk at night, for that fierce old wolf is here from sunrise till evening close."

"All that you must arrange as you can," answered the Prince. "I would not, for half my dominions, have those two meet——But will you accept the custody, and give the promise? for I must now go."

"Well, well, since it may be no better," rejoined the English officer, bluntly, "I must even take what your Highness is pleased to grant: I give you my honour then, sir, to observe the orders you have given, but I must have a soldier or two to keep guard, for we cannot prevent him, I suppose, from seeing his friends."

"During the day," answered Frederic, "but not after nightfall. You can take a guard if you think it necessary. Come to me in half an hour and you shall have an order for his custody. We must hear the tale of

your strange adventures, fair lady, at some other time,—for the present, fare-you-well!”

Thus saying, the Prince quitted the room by the door on his right side ; and, drawing Agnes’s arm through his, Herbert returned towards his own lodging, saying: “ You shall be his little gaoler, Agnes ; and, as he has dealt nobly and truly by you, so you shall repay his services by kind services in return.”

END OF VOL. I.

London:
Printed by STEWART and MURRAY,
Old Bailey.



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